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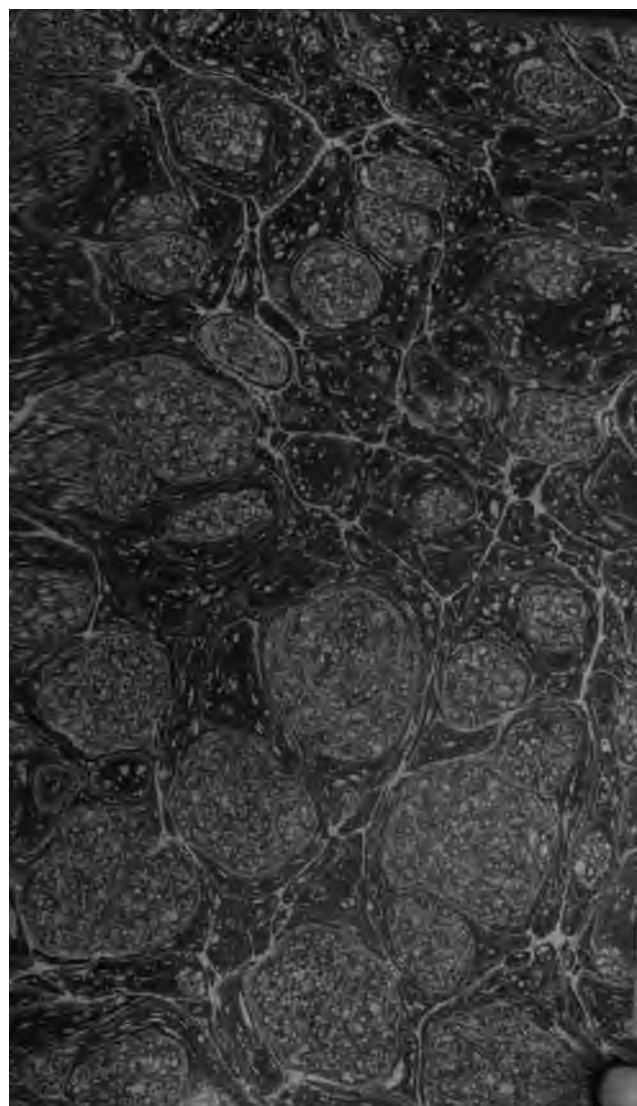
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280 f.

2516



Hastings Nathaniel Middleton.



280 f. 2516





P O E M S

AND

P L A Y S,

BY MR. JERNINGHAM.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

A NEW EDITION.



L O N D O N :

Printed by Luke Hansard,

For NORNAVILLE and FELL, Successors to

Mr. Robson, New Bond-street.

1806.

1981

A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

.....

THE Contents of this and the subsequent Volume are now collected, for the purpose of presenting to the Public, a correct and uniform edition of the Author's poetical works.

To accommodate those, who are in possession of the first and second Volumes, the Editor acquaints them, that the third and fourth Volumes may be purchased separately.

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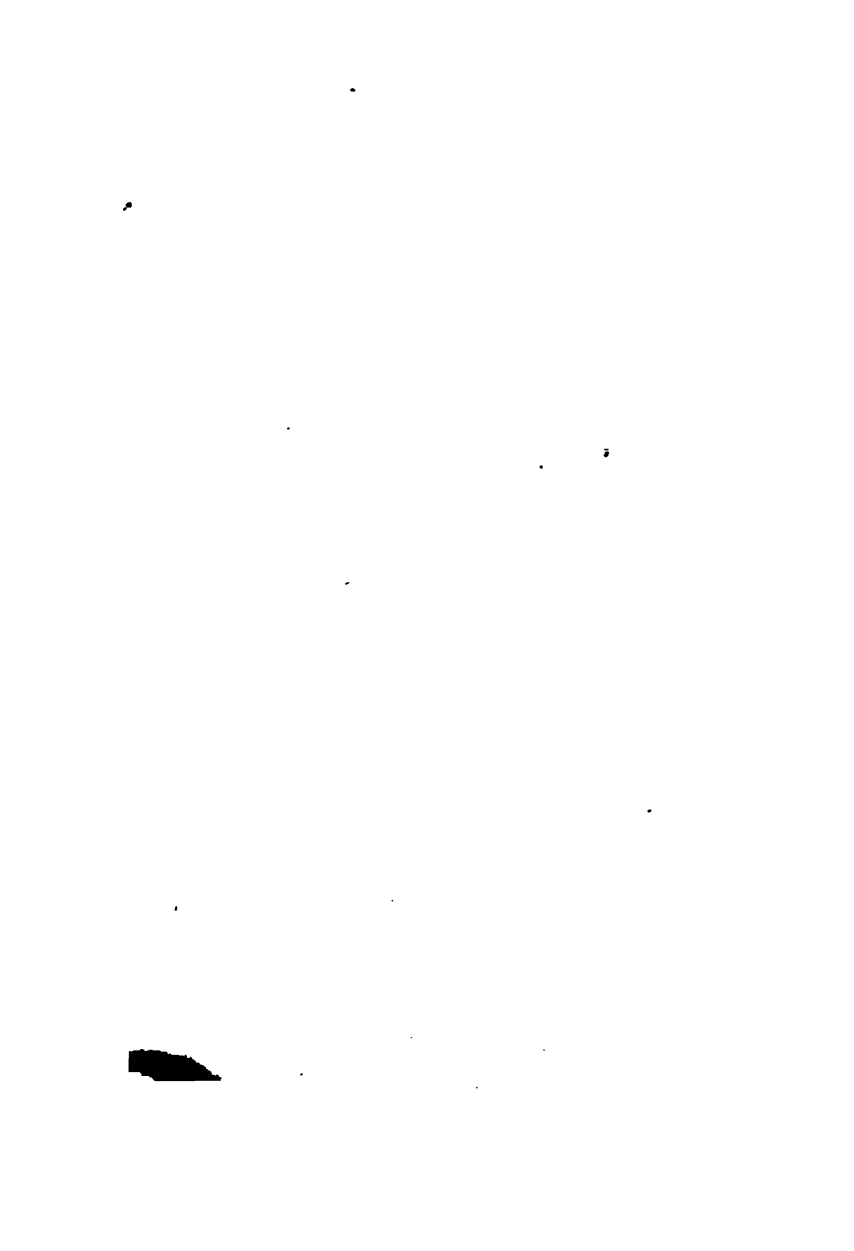
THE
SIEGE OF BERWICK.

A TRAGEDY.

AS PERFORMED AT THE
THEATRE-ROYAL, COVENT-GARDEN.

VOL. III.

B



TO THE
EARL OF CARLISLE.

THE prefixing your Lordship's name
to the following Tragedy, is a tacit avowal
of my ambition of obtaining the appro-
bation of One, who has, by two illustrious

specimens, displayed to the world his superior skill in the Dramatic Art.

I am,

with the sentiments of
the highest regard,

Your Lordship's

faithful humble servant,

EDWARD JERNINGHAM.

ADVERTISEMENT.

IN the reign of Edward the Third, Sir Alexander Seaton refused to surrender the town of Berwick, even at the peril of losing his two Sons; who being taken prisoners in a sally, were threatened with immediate death, unless the town was delivered up.

*See Abercromby's Martial Achievements,
vol. ii. p. 29.*

PROLOGUE.

Written by the AUTHOR;

And Spoken by Mr. Harley.

*WHILE fears and hopes alternate thoughts suggest,
 And now disturb, now soothe the Author's breast ;
 While expectation breathes an awful pause,
 Ere yet the ready hand the curtain draws,
 Ere yet the action glows—I come a spy,
 To cast around a reconnoit'ring eye.
 Yet then, as I this fearful Pit explore,
 Where Authors sometimes fall to rise to more,
 Here when th' Adventurer dares you to the field,
 If his fond efforts some small merit yield,
 I've seen your gen'rous arm forbear the blow,
 And raise to life and fame the grateful foe.*

*For you, the boist'rous inmates of the sky !
 Bold is the man who dares your pow'r defy ;
 With you confusion her loud compact forms,
 You ride the clouds, and are yourselves the storms.
 Yet have I seen you mitigate your rage,
 And spare the Adventurer struggling on the Stage ;
 If in some scenes (the rest tho' feebly done)
 Unerring Nature own'd her genuine Son,
 Your glowing soul has grasp'd the Author's cause,
 And hurl'd around the thunder of applause.*

*For you, ye glittering Amazonian train,
 Whose power is dreaded on the critic plain !
 Tho' marshal'd to the war by taste severe,
 Yet meek indulgence follows in the rear :*

*And oft on beauty's cheek I've lov'd to trace,
Soft stealing down, the holy tear of grace.*

*Rais'd by the thoughts these soothing hopes create,
I'll bid the Bard come forth, and meet his fate,
The tyrant Terror from his breast erase,
Rush on the scene, and combat for your praise.*

PROLOGUE,

Spoken when this Tragedy was performed at Berwick ;

Written by the AUTHOR.

*THE Tragic Muse this night exalts her tone
To breathe the Tale that Berwick calls her own.
In days of yore, this hallowed spot brought forth
The tow'ring offspring of heroic worth !
Ye Natives of this time-ennobled Town,
Plants of her hand, and heirs of her renown,
List to the Theme to your famed Tweed allied,
And mark th' eventful scene with filial pride.*

*The historic picture we hold up to view,
Imbrown'd with manners of the antique hue,
Strictly observant of fixed valor's rule,
A genuine portrait from old Honor's school,
This Audience may behold with partial gaze,
As their fam'd Ancestor of distant days,
And own as does the youth a kindred fire,
Who marks the features of his god-like Sire.*

CHARACTERS.

Sir Alexander Seaton	- - - -	Mr. Pope.
Archibald	} his sons,	Mr. Middleton.
Valentine		Mr. Holman.
Anselm, a monk,	- - - -	Mr. Harley.
Donaldson, an officer,	- - - -	Mr. Macready.
Ethelberta, wife of Sir Alexander,		Mrs. Pope.
Juliana,	- - - -	Mrs. Fawcett.
Herald, &c.		

THE
SIEGE OF BERWICK.

ACT THE FIRST.

Sir Alexander, Archibald, Valentine.

SIR ALEXANDER.

IT is not action only that adorns
The soldier's character, it is patience,
Calm and induring in the rugged hour
Of want, that forms the nobler part of duty :
You, my lov'd sons, and all your fellow-sufferers,
Have well that rigorous iron task perform'd.
But now a smoother train of hours advances ;
The truce, which at to-morrow's dawn takes place,
Enables me from out the northern gate
To dismiss the aged and the infirm,
Then disencumber'd of its useless numbers
This foe-encircled town shall raise its head ;

The hand of scarceness shall no more dispense
Her meagre morsel to th' exhausted soldier,
But cheering competency shall provide
The meal.

ARCHIBALD.

'Tis well! yet then inform me, Sir,
How you'll employ the invaluable hours
That still precede the truce?

SIR ALEXANDER.

Our gallant men
Have been severely tried, and worn with toil.

ARCHIBALD.

Their toil-enfeebled bodies still enclose
The mounting spirit of unwearied vigor.

VALENTINE.

Prompt as the hawk to dart upon his prey.

ARCHIBALD.

The foe since yesterday appears to have lost
Half of his wonted intrepidity.

VALENTINE.

That show'r of arrows we pour'd down at eve
Hath somewhat quench'd their ardor!

SIR ALEXANDER.

Be it so;

But tell me what is now your present purpose:
Methinks that swelling to some bold design
Your bosom labours.---Speak, my Valentine.

OF BERWICK.

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VALENTINE.

Command my elder brother, Sir, to speak.

SIR ALEXANDER.

Unfold then, Archibald, this mysterious something,
This painful secret that disturbs you both.

ARCHIBALD.

Last night, as we reclin'd upon our couch,
Still talking o'er (as is our wonted manner)
The various hazard of the busy day,
We wish'd, we fondly wish'd, that ere the truce
Should intervene, some daring enterprize
Might be attempted under our direction :
Thus we convers'd in sacred confidence
Till as our weak'ning voices died away
We wearied into rest---'twas then an image-----

VALENTINE.

Mark, Sir, what now my brother will unfold,

ARCHIBALD.

'Twas then an image rush'd upon my sight,
It shew'd as one of the angelic train,
A circling glory glitter'd o'er his head,
A smile benignant beautified his lip,
And thus he spoke---' Sons of the valiant Scaton,
Arise and hasten to the southern gate,
Thence dart upon the foe.'---The vision ceas'd
And vanish'd into air! while a rude noise
Like the fierce struggle of contending spears

Suddenly waked us! Starting from my couch,
And ere I cou'd communicate my dream,
Valentine with impatient voice disclos'd
The mutual vision.

VALENTINE.

'Twas as he relates ;
By honor's winnow'd purity I swear
The nightly visitation also came
To me.

SIR ALEXANDER.

I hazard no impeachment of
Your truth ; yet then, endearing children, say,
How can a prudent tender parent send
His valiant sons to danger's precipice
At the fantastic impulse of a dream ?

ARCHIBALD.

In the old time we read that dreams have been
The sure prophetic heralds of success.

VALENTINE.

Oh do not, Sir, with caution's chill restraint
O'ershade the splendid purpose of our soul.

ARCHIBALD.

Let the bright vision be forgot, if that
Offend you, and attend to reason's voice :
Does not the weary foe anticipate
Th' approaching truce, and guard neglectingly
The southern gate ?

OF BERWICK

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SIR ALEXANDER.

'Tis a mask'd neglect

It is the couchant lion prompt to seize
Th' unwary prey---ah ! trust not to his stern
Repose.

VALENTINE.

If danger still must check the current
Of enterprize, tell, tell me, Father, wherefore
You rear'd us in the hardy school of war?

ARCHIBALD.

The road to martial glory well thou know'st
Is not gay-sprinkled o'er with flowers, but broken
Helmets, shiver'd spears, and blood-stain'd arrows
Choak up the aspiring path of fame's ascent.

VALENTINE.

To be restrain'd when proud occasion calls,
'Twere better thou hadst led me to some cloister,
Where holy peace resides, o'er-canopied
By antient roofs, that ever shade her from
The madd'ning sun-beams of ambition's sky.

SIR ALEXANDER.

Forbear to torture thus a parent's feelings.

ARCHIBALD.

Indulgent father, spurn not our petition,
Know with the experienced Melvil we have just
Conferr'd.

THE SIEGE

SIR ALEXANDER.

And he undoubtedly contemn'd
Your gaudy dream, that meteor of the brain.

VALENTINE.

'Twas not the meteor of a heated brain,
It was a sun-beam of revealing Heaven,
It was the sympathetic glow of two
According minds.

SIR ALEXANDER.

Of this enough---What said
Th' experienc'd Melvil?

ARCHIBALD.

After due attention
To our proposal, he first stamp'd it with
The seal of his applause, and then added
Arguments that embodied as it were
Our enterprize, and brighten'd it with the
Calm colouring of reason.

SIR ALEXANDER.

I will myself
Confer with Melvil; and if he has words
To smooth the rugged doubts that haunt my mind,
Think not, my valiant sons, I shall withhold
You from the object of your bold request.

ARCHIBALD.

To keep unsullied the bright martial name
Of Seaton, is indeed my proudest wish.

OF BERWICK.

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VALENTINE.

And if thy Valentine might add his might
To the rich treasury of his Father's fame,
He would be happy.

SIR ALEXANDER.

Wait till I return.

Erit.]

ARCHIBALD.

Excellent man! his ardour to promote
Our cause, and his solicitude about
Our safety, combat and distract his will.

VALENTINE.

More active, warm, and forcible affection
Was ne'er embosom'd in a father's soul;
And therefore much I fear that Melvil can't
Subdue his scruples.

ARCHIBALD.

Oft have I observ'd
That Melvil's clear illumin'd manly judgment
Possesses something like magnetic power,
Which still attracts opinion to his side.

VALENTINE.

May that attractive power be at this moment
Endued with double influence, that my Father
Withholding his restraint, I might unbounded
Spring against the foe!--This common praise
That's claim'd by every soldier, ill supplies

My starv'd and craving appetite of fame.

ARCHIBALD.

Endearing Valentine, think not that I
Reprove these flashes of an ardent mind;
But should your mounting wishes meet controul,
Would not a Father's tender caution with
Reproach.

VALENTINE.

Sooner than wound his feeling mind
With sullen, splenetic, unduteous carriage,
I would, like the Spartan boy (who silently
Endur'd the gnawing fox) conceal my sorrow,
Though, like the savage animal, it should
Prey upon my vitals.

ARCHIBALD.

Consider also
This warlike age will gratify your wishes
With many a future enterprize! The morn
Of life is now but breaking on thy youth.

VALENTINE.

Talk not to me of early youth: behold,
Edward's brave son, whose age but equals mine---
Oh were I equal with him in renown!
Behold that boy on Cressy's wond'ring field
Reaping an immortal harvest, while I
Enveloped in obscurity---

ARCHIBALD.

Desist,

I hear some step approaching.

Enter Donaldson.

VALENTINE.

'Tis my Father;

Ah, no! 'tis Donaldson. Say, hast thou seen
The Governor?

DONALDSON.

I saw him as I pass'd by
In close conference engag'd with Melvil.

VALENTINE.

Know'st thou the subject of their conference?

DONALDSON.

There breathes an ignorant rumour of a sally,
Propos'd it seems by Archibald and you.

ARCHIBALD.

It is as you have darkly heard, and here
Impatiently we wait the Governor's
Return.

VALENTINE.

See, here he comes.

Enter Sir Alexander.

Hail to my Father!

ARCHIBALD.

Sir, you appear disturbed.

THE SIEGE

SIR ALEXANDER.

Ah! tell me, Archibald,
Is't with a look of cheerfulness a parent
Resigns his duteous children to the hazard
Of a dread enterprise?

ARCHIBALD.

Yet then reflect,
Melvil the military sage approves
The enterprize.

SIR ALEXANDER.

But Melvil has no children,
His smooth sail of honour meets no adverse
Gales to check its progress.—'Tis not thus with me:
Say how shall I endure the keen reproofs
Of Ethelberta, when she is inform'd
That I have sent, without the imperious call
Of stern necessity, her darling children
To the path of danger?

VALENTINE.

Speak not of danger,
It is our element, our road to Fame!

SIR ALEXANDER.

Forgive this trembling caution in a parent.

VALENTINE.

Had England's warlike king suppress'd his son's
Ascending soul, on her proud list of victories,
Say, should we see the splendid name of Cressy?

ARCHIBALD.

'Twas on the summit of a neighb'ring hill
 The father stood, and saw his youthful son
 Oppose the pride of France; and when the Earls
 Of Warwick and of Oxford sent a herald,
 To claim immediate succour from the king---

VALENTINE.

Did not the king reply, Go tell the lords
 That while my daring Edward is alive,
 They will require my aid in vain: the glory
 Of this great day shall be his own?

SIR ALEXANDER.

Enough!

Your arguments prevail, and you have won me
 To your request.---Go, join the skilful Melvil,
 The Nestor of the war, and strictly mark
 His words and well-weigh'd counsel---first receive
 An anxious Father's blessing. (*Embraces his Sons.*)

May that Power

Which oft hath shielded me in many a combat,
 Oh! may that guardian, kind, benignant Angel
 Now hover o'er my children!

(Leads them to the door, and returns.)

Donaldson,

This is an awful moment for a Father!

DONALDSON.

Think not so deeply, Sir, nor feed your mind

With busy tort'ring vain surmises; think
How often you've encounter'd perils imminent,
And still return'd with glory.

SIR ALEXANDER.

Unavailing
Remembrance! rear'd as I have almost been
In storms of battle, say what paternal
Bosom will not feel a warm renew'd affection
For two such sons staged to the front of danger?

DONALDSON.

But should not Ethelberta be informed?

SIR ALEXANDER.

Ah! there you probe my bosom's tender part:
No, Donaldson, the mother must not know
The gathering storm that's brooding o'er her sons;
Her quick'ning apprehension would outrun
The deed, and picture to itself images
That would distract her.---'Tis my duty, my
Religion, still to shield her mind from all
That may assail it.

DONALDSON.

Many a time have
I listen'd to the splendid narrative
Of Ethelberta's virtues.

SIR ALEXANDER.

From the happy hour
I first call'd her mine, unto this moment.

with unremitting fortitude
 led me through many a rugged day.

DONALDSON.

That England triumphs in her birth.

SIR ALEXANDER.

fam'd tournaments that Edward held
 before, did I first behold that matchless
 tho' attractive, yet not dazzling :
 the softer green amidst the colours
 of a royal bow, so Ethelberta
 amid the circling flush of British beauties.
 the gorgeous castle, and its proud delights,
 the daughter of Earl Nevil willingly
 , to share with me the perils of
 the crusade : This faithful Wife, this soothing
 on of my way, still smooth'd the harrow'd
 war----Ev'n as the wall-flower rears its form,
 grows and flourishes 'midst tombs and ruins,
 Ethelberta's warm affection grew
 in sickness, want, fatigue, distress, and danger.

Enter Anselm.

My father! what dost thou report?

ANSELM.

My step I come, Sir, to acquaint you
 that bold enterprize is well prepar'd :
 the subterraneous windings did
 our troops advance, 'till they approach'd

The chapel of St. Andrew, near the gate
That issues to the field : here paus'd the band—
And then in sacred silence lowly bending
Dedicated themselves unto their country.

SIR ALEXANDER.

What follow'd ?

ANSELM.

Then with solemn voice I utter'd
Warm from my throbbing heart, the benediction
That is appointed in the hour of danger.

SIR ALEXANDER.

Yet tell me what directions then were given ?

ANSELM.

It was agreed that your two sons, attended
By a chosen few, should rush upon the foe,
While Melvil with a greater number should,
Taking a wide circling path, fall on the rear.
Brave Melvil first began the silent march :
Then did your sons lead forth their gallant men
Thro' the deep awful gloom---the signal for
The onset is to be the convent bell
That tolls at midnight.

SIR ALEXANDER.

Wherefore did I yield me
To their wild request ? Oh say, is't yet too late ?
The leave they wrested from me I may still
Recall.

OF BERWICK.

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ANSELM.

The die is cast, and you must wait
not: yet elevate your mind to hope;
I augur well of this bold enterprize.

SIR ALEXANDER.

And Father shou'd I not have been
cautious, more reserved?

ANSELM.

The sacred poet
Children are as arrows in the hand
sent, to perform his purpose.

SIR ALEXANDER.

Words, good Anselm, animate my hopes,
Lend me to my wonted confidence
again.---Did'st thou not say, the convent bell
last night was th' appointed signal for
onset?

ANSELM.

Even so!

SIR ALEXANDER.

See Ethelberta comes;
Hail---'tis meet that now ye both retire.

(Exit.)

Enter Ethelberta.

ETHELBERTA.

I'm no intruder; if I am,

THE SIEGE.

My warm solicitude for you must plead
Indulgence.

SIR ALEXANDER.

Ever most welcome!

ETHELBERTA.

Methinks

You look all harass'd, pale and overcome;
'Tis not surprising---but I'm told the foe
Anticipates the truce, by retreating
To some distance.---Wherefore do you not
Retire to rest? 'Tis late, 'tis almost midnight.

SIR ALEXANDER.

Midnight, did'st thou say?

ETHELBERTA.

Sir, you seem alarm'd?

SIR ALEXANDER.

What recent subject is there to alarm me?

ETHELBERTA.

Forgive my busy fond anxiety,
That catches as it were at airy symptoms.---
Where are my sons? tell me when I may see them?

SIR ALEXANDER.

I hope to-morrow.

ETHELBERTA.

Wherefore dost thou only
Hope? Does not the truce take place to-morrow?

en prevents?---

(The bell tolls).

Oh! what transports you thus?
At the wonted midnight bell, that calls
Fathers to their pray'rs; relieve,
Me from this painful ignorance,
That mine Ethelberta share the pang
Of thy heart.

SIR ALEXANDER.

Forbear to question me---

ETHELBERTA.

I not retire to rest, for sure you
Much?

SIR ALEXANDER.

Perchance I may.---Directions
Best import I have first to give!

ETHELBERTA.

I---do not tarry long.---Care and sorrow
On thy brow.---Farewell!--my warmest
To my sons!--- *(Exit.)*

SIR ALEXANDER.

That blessing was pronounc'd
Whose sons perchance are now no more---

Enter Donaldson.

Donaldson, what hast thou to relate?

DONALDSON.

A perfidious means the foe, appris'd
Intended sally, were prepar'd to meet

The troops that Melvil led.—O'erpower'd by numbers,
He and most of his brave men are slain :
As for your valiant sons---

SIR ALEXANDER.

Ah ! what of them ?

DONALDSON.

In warmest combat they are now engag'd !

SIR ALEXANDER.

I'll fly to their assistance--- (*Draws his sabre.*)

DONALDSON.

Let me first---

SIR ALEXANDER.

Cease your vain talking, I must speed away
To save my sons, or perish in their cause.

(*Exeunt.*)

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT THE SECOND.

.....

Enter Ethelberta and Juliana.

ETHELBERTA.

SAY, what can be the cause of their deserting me?
I have not since the truce began beheld
The Governor, nor have I yet embrac'd
My children! they whose dutiful affection
I have until this present hour experienc'd!
Whence comes it they defraud me of their cheering
Presence?

JULIANA.

'Tis business of some great moment
Perchance delays them.

ETHELBERTA.

Feed me not with vain
Pretexts; their presence only can assuage
My starv'd and ravenous longing! wild conception
Peoples the void of absence with many
Ghastly and terrific forms.

JULIANA.

Shall I withdraw
In order to investigate the cause?

THE SIEGE

ETHELBERTA.

No, Juliana, you must not desert me,
I am too wretched and unfit for solitude!
Why do you send your view to yonder portal.
(Juliana retires a few steps, and then returns.)

JULIANA.

Now cast away your fears; behold, behold!
The Governor approaches.

Enter Sir Alexander.

ETHELBERTA.

Your presence
Is as the sun unto the darken'd landscape:
Wherefore hast thou linger'd thus? Oh, tell me
Where are my children?

SIR ALEXANDER.

They are well.

ETHELBERTA.

Yet why
Do they delay to bless a mother's sight?

SIR ALEXANDER.

'Tis proper now I should reveal.

ETHELBERTA.

Reveal!

You've then some fearful secret to unfold.

SIR ALEXANDER.

Dear Ethelberta, be not thus alarm'd!

Already have I said our boys are well.
Last night a sally was propos'd. Archibald
And Valentine entreated much to lead
The onset.

ETHELBERTA.

And you yielded to their entreaty?

SIR ALEXANDER.

The subtle foe by some dark perfidy
Had early notice of the deep-laid scheme,
And were too well prepar'd.

ETHELBERTA.

My blood runs cold.

SIR ALEXANDER.

Ah, rather let it glow at my recital:
Your sons have gain'd the warrior's best reward,
Unsullied fame. Three times did their small force
Drive back their triple-number'd foes; at length,
By their encreasing powers subdued (with nine
Of their brave men remaining) they submitted
To be captives.

ETHELBERTA.

Say, who first suggested
This rash enterprize?

SIR ALEXANDER.

Melvil applauded
What my sons propos'd; and to the energy

With which he utter'd his approving thought
Did I reluctantly give my assent.

ETHELBERTA..

Curs'd be old Melvil for his rash approval!

SIR ALEXANDER.

Spare your resentment, and revere the dead;
Fall'n is his valiant arm, to rise no more.

ETHELBERTA.

Then peace be to his soul! Let me retain
A grateful sense to Heav'n that my lov'd children
Are not, as Melvil, number'd with the slain;
The loss of those dear boys would be to me
As if the spring were blotted from the year.
Come, Juliana, let us to our custom'd
Visitation of the sick and wounded.

Exit Ethelberta and Juliana.

Enter Anselm.

ANSELM.

A herald from the foe is just arriv'd,
And waits your orders for admission.

SIR ALEXANDER.

Let him be admitted.

Enter Herald.

THE HERALD.

Sir, this letter,
Of high import, I'm order'd to deliver

Into your hands only.

SIR ALEXANDER.

Retire awhile:

In some few moments come for my reply.

(Reads to himself.)

ANSELM.

Methinks you look disturb'd! Say, what can be
The drift of this important note?

SIR ALEXANDER.

Attend! *(reads aloud.)*

" Complaints have reach'd me from my court, as if
" I linger'd in subjecting your proud town:
" To these complaints strong menaces are added!
" I therefore summon you to surrender,
" Or else your sons shall rue your stubbornness:
" I will erect two pillars near the tower
" From whence your crowding arrows gall us most;
" To these two pillars shall your sons be chain'd;
" Expos'd to the whole tempest of the war."

ANSELM.

The blackest fiend in hell conceiv'd that thought,
And breath'd it on his mind.

SIR ALEXANDER.

I know him well;

It suits the native disposition of the man.

Enter Ethelbert.

THE SIEGE

ETHELBERTA.

Ah ! wonder not I hastily return :
I'm told a Herald from the camp is come-----
What tidings of my sons ?

SIR ALEXANDER.

Peruse this note.

(She reads.

ETHELBERTA.

Say, what dost thou intend to do ?

SIR ALEXANDER.

My duty.

ETHELBERTA.

Is't then a duty to destroy your children ?
To rend affection from your inmost breast ;
Uproot the thoughts of pity as they grow ;
Embowel nature of her hallow'd feelings ?
And to a Mother dare you this avow ?

SIR ALEXANDER.

I dare avow what honour bids me do.

ETHELBERTA.

The untam'd Arab, who exists on plunder,
Lets fall his booty to assist his child !
But you, whom polish'd manners should adorn,
Whose pure religion wears a softer feature,
Do you reject the impulse of compassion,
For the stern morals of imagin'd honour ?

Enter Herald.

HERALD.

Sir, the time urges, what is your reply?

SIR ALEXANDER.

Go, tell your savage, and blood-thirsty General,
The sacred oath I utter'd to my country
And to my royal master, when I was
Exalted to the station I now hold
Contains my answer.---Sir, you may return.

ETHELBERTA.

Stay one short moment, hear a mother plead:
Tho' dead to pity, riches may perchance
Allure his mind! I've jewels of high value-----

(Sir Alexander makes a signal to
the Herald, who retires.)

He goes, he heeds not what I say; my sons
Are then condemn'd without resource. Enjoy,
(turning to Sir Alexander.)

Enjoy this philosophic victory,
This conquest, this cold triumph o'er all feeling---
Domestic pity, conjugal affiance,
Fatherly endearment, are by you profan'd!

SIR ALEXANDER.

What does this mean? dare you assert I do
Not love my children?

ETHELBERTA.

Say, where are the proofs?
Is yielding-up your sons without a conflict,

Without resorting to the prompt expedient
Affection wou'd have flown to? Is resigning
Your sons, without the interposing a short
Delay, without a pause, without inventing
Some pious artifice; are these the proofs
Of your paternal kindness? Evidence
Like this would not be admitted in the court
Of Nature.

SIR ALEXANDER.

Cease this idle declamation!

Respect, respect the great, the solemn trial,
To which my pure allegiance now is call'd!
I see the desolating hour approach,
Like the dark storm that thickens as it sails:
It is the woman's privilege to weep
And utter her complaints: to man belongs
The majesty of grief! yet not the less
Does the fond parent warm this bosom:
Ev'n while proud honour and relentless duty
Seem to command the function of my soul,
I've that within that tells me I'm a father.

ETHELBERTA.

Thus the pale cheek of hungry fame is flush'd
And ruddied o'er with the false glow of duty.

ANSELM.

Make not the bitter cup he's doomed to drink
Still more bitter by the infusions of reproach.

ETHELBERTA.

May not the broken-hearted mother speak ;
May not her madd'ning sorrow still attempt
To snatch her children from destruction ;

Enter an Officer.

OFFICER.

I come to pour glad tidings on your ear !
Your sons-----

ETHELBERTA.

What of my sons ?

OFFICER.

They are returned :
Relenting, as 'tis thought, of his intention,
The General has restor'd them to your wishes.

ETHELBERTA.

Ah ! tell me where you saw them ?

OFFICER.

Ent'ring at
The southern gate, amidst th' applauding multitude !
They bade me hasten to your presence with
The news of their return.

ETHELBERTA.

Wherefore do they
Linger thus ?

OFFICER.

Methinks I hear their foot-steps--

THE SIEGE

Enter Archibald and Valentine.

ETHELBERTA.

What glorious vision meets my raptur'd eyes!

(Runs to embrace them.)

This sudden joy, this unimagined heaven,
Transports me beyond all pow'r of utterance.---

SIR ALEXANDER.

Your presence, my lov'd children, smooths
The rugged conflict in my breast.---Whence comes
This change of counsel in the tyrant's mind?

ETHELBERTA.

Ah! rather tell me where, where is the joy
That ought to harmonise with our's? Archibald,
Your down-cast look portends some dread intelligence:
And you, my Valentine, where is thy wonted
Gaiety?

ARCHIBALD.

I have of high importance
Something to communicate to my Father.

ETHELBERTA.

May not I be present at the interview?

ARCHIBALD.

What I'm going to unfold will distress you.

ETHELBERTA.

No, no! your mutual safety is sufficient
To bear me up against this new calamity!
But wherefore do you weep?

OF BERWICK.

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ARCHIBALD.

These tears I shed
Spring from affection, not from fear.—I'll die
Worthy of such parents.

VALENTINE.

So will I!

ETHELBERTA.

Wherefore,

Wherefore do ye talk of death?

ARCHIBALD.

With a mockery
Of pity does the General send us back :
One of us must return to be the victim
Of his cruelty.

ETHELBERTA.

Oh! never.

ARCHIBALD.

We're bound
By honour's tie, the soldier's strongest chain ;
One must return : and unappall'd we wait
(*turning to Sir Alexander.*)
For your decision.

SIR ALEXANDER.

Ah! what Father can
Decide of two affectionate and duteous
Children, which shall be led to slaughter? Say,

Was I to raise in awful thought the balance
Of my affection, and cou'd judgment see
One side prevail, still sacred nature's hand
Would join and equalize the trembling scales.

VALENTINE (to Ethelberta.)

Be comforted.

ETHELBERTA.

Oh! my dear Valentine.

(Falls on his neck.)

ANSELM.

I think all this is a mere stratagem
To lengthen out the truce.—Allow me, Sir,
To hasten to the General's tent; there will
I urge with glowing words my suit,
There paint the infamy that must involve him,
If, thus profaning the hallow'd feelings
Of Parents—

VALENTINE.

Holy father! 'twou'd become
Thee better to assuage, support with comfort's
Lenient voice, this drooping mother, than to
Interfere with what regard's my brother's
Honour and my own.

ETHELBERTA.

I'll write to the General
In words of soothing power, in terms of energy,
Such as the mother's throbbing heart conceives.

OF BERWICK.

39

VALENTINE.

No letter must be written, for 'twould seem
Our dictating, and would shew like cowardice.

SIR ALEXANDER.

There spoke my valiant son.

ARCHIBALD.

Our mutual dignity
Forbids, abhors all interposition.

ETHELBERTA.

Then I have lost my children.

VALENTINE.

That follows not;
He who is first in years, in skill, experience,
He must be spar'd, the general cause demands him.

ARCHIBALD.

What says the hasty Valentine?

VALENTINE.

Command

Your rising indignation, I'll explain.---
Allow us, Father, for some few moments,
To confer alone, that free from all restraint
I may to Archibald disclose my mind,
And utter arguments that may subdue
His reason to my ardent wish, and thus
Prevent th' extinction of our family.

ARCHIBALD.

Perish to the root the name of Seaton,

And let oblivion's night o'ershade the proud
Exploits of our long ancestry, ere I
Consent to that which must degrade and shrink
Me in my own esteem !

VALENTINE.

I mean not that.

SIR ALEXANDER.

Come, Ethelberta, let us for a while
Retire, and leave them to confer alone.

ETHELBERTA.

Well the high theme of your discourse I know,
It is a contest for the palm of death :
But in this glorious conflict still remember
What is due to your afflicted Mother,
If any plan, expedient, or device,
Allied to honour, should suggest itself ;
If any beam should pierce this awful gloom,
Admit its sacred influence on your mind,
And save me from despair.

(Exit with Anselm, Juliana, and Sir Alexander.)

VALENTINE.

Fear is no inmate of thy glowing breast ;
Yet then reflect that other thoughts than those
That courage breathes must sometimes regulate
A soldier's conduct. Say, hast thou not heard
That mercy, resignation, are the nobler
Duties of a soldier ?

OF BERWICK.

41

ARCHIBALD.

Where is now that
Mercy claim'd? where call'd for? mercy on whom?

VALENTINE.

Mercy on your Parents, and on your Country.

ARCHIBALD.

This puerile declamation moves me not.

VALENTINE.

I speak the language of a mind sincere,
To one who is my friend as well as brother,
For whom my partial fondness ne'er was doubted.

ARCHIBALD.

He loves me not who does not love my fame!
Was I to yield to your ill-tim'd suggestion,
Wou'd not each finger mark me as I pass,
As one who skulks behind the privilege
Of eldership to save himself from death?
I feel dishonour as I feel a wound---
The fatal spot to which we both aspire,
Is glory's prize, is honour's awful station,
And I now claim it as my sacred birth-right.

VALENTINE.

I contend no longer.

ARCHIBALD.

Let me hasten,
Fly to my Father to proclaim the news,
That Valentine at length consents to live.

VALENTINE.

Allow me one short moment, and be calm :
Say, wilt thou, with an avarice of fame,
Demand exclusively the meed of glory !
Wilt thou pursue the path that leads to death,
And leave thy faithful Valentine behind ?

ARCHIBALD.

Cease, generous brother, or thou'lt break my heart—

VALENTINE.

When first I quitted childhood's lowly vale,
Eager with you I climb'd youth's arduous height,
Whence greater scenes expanded on my view ;
Still our pursuits, consenting to one plan,
Our lives like wedded streams united roll'd ;
And will you now disturb the sacred tide,
And bid the kindred waves disparting run ?

ARCHIBALD.

'Tis as you say, in us was ever found
The sympathetic union of the mind,
The harmony of affection and design.

VALENTINE.

And wou'd it not be sacrilege to tear
Our souls asunder?—Mark my firm resolve,
I will attend thee to the fatal spot,
And share an equal destiny with thee.

ARCHIBALD.

I yield, I bow to thy sublimer mind.

OF BERWICK.

49

VALENTINE.

haste away, lest Ethelberta shou'd
n, and with her tears unman our purpose.

ARCHIBALD.

ed—We'll hasten to our mutual doom,
quals at the hallow'd shrine of danger.

VALENTINE.

not the spirits of our valiant ancestry
from their golden thrones on high, well pleas'd
e thus *(Encircling his brother.)* .
we march undaunted to our fate.
heart---

ARCHIBALD.

One cause---

VALENTINE.

One ruin, and one fame!

[Exeunt.]

END OF THE SECOND ACT

ACT THE THIRD.

.....

Enter Ethelberta and Juliana.

ETHELBERTA.

FLED to the camp! Both fled! Impossible!

JULIANA.

Pure honour breathing on their bosom—

ETHELBERTA.

Fled,

Without one parting word!

JULIANA.

The great trial

They are call'd to claims their whole attention.

ETHELBERTA.

Has then the phantom glory steel'd my children
Into savages?—Not one endearing
Word to soothe their fond afflicted Mother?

JULIANA.

The rigorous duty of their situation—

ETHELBERTA.

What duty is more pressing or more sacred

Than that a Mother claims? It rises out
Of Nature's bosom, summon'd by the voice
Of Heaven!

JULIANA.

Their better judgment held them from
Your presence; well, full well they knew the sight
Of two sons hast'ning to untimely death
Wou'd rend your heart.

ETHELBERTA.

It must be so, it was,
It was their love that urg'd them to avoid me!
The cloud of dark surmise that here was gathering
Begins to melt in air! and my full heart
Expands to all its wonted warm affection.

JULIANA.

To this affection join a confidence
That all may yet be well.

ETHELBERTA.

I dare not cast
A meeting glance upon th' approaching hour---
Cou'd I but raise my sinking mind to the
Faint hope, that the arrows haply might not
Reach my children!--That the tyrant may
Relent of his fell purpose! Vain endeavour!--
Each way I look I meet despair.-----Yet now---
A thought possesses me---Indulge my weakness---
Ah! pity the disease that flies to such

A remedy---I've heard a skilful sorceress
Does in this town reside, whose magic power
Unfolds the future to her trembling visitant---

JULIANA.

It is as you report, and many a hapless
Virgin, many a distressful mother,
Have consulted her.

ETHELBERTA.

'Tis said she rivals

The weird sisterhood of ancient days,
While o'er her mind pale prophecy hangs fluttering,
The dread vaunt-courier of futurity---
Perchance this deeply-skill'd magician may
Transport my ignorant fears beyond th' event.

JULIANA.

Yet say, was she by her exploring art
To raise your ignorant fears to horrid certainties---

ETHELBERTA.

Better to know the worse, than thus to live
In apprehension, unrelenting agony!---
Can'st thou inform me where the sorceress dwells?

JULIANA.

Her lonely cell is seen not far from hence,
Amidst the ruins of an ancient cloister,
Upon the burial ground! There on a seat
Of ebony, o'erspread with human skulls,
She exerciseth her tremendous function.

ETHELBERTA.

Whence does the hag derive her daring mission?
Is't from on high, or from the caves of hell?
Does she not lift her impious hand to rend
The sanctuary-veil that hangs 'tween men and angels?
Let me be wretched, let me not be impious:
Never will I tread the path that leads to
Her unhallow'd cell.---Another thought occurs,
Which meets my heart's consent---Come, come what
 may,
I'll go in person to the hostile camp,
There, rushing on the rude barbarian,
I will demand my children.

JULIANA.

Vain, vain project!

ETHELBERTA.

He'll hear my plaintive voice, he'll see these eyes
In tears.

JULIANA.

Th' unfeeling wretch will mock those tears.

ETHELBERTA.

Affection will endue my speech with eloquence;
The monster self will soften at warm nature
Pleading for her darling sons.

JULIANA.

Consider

What dangers you'll encounter, to what insults

You there may be expos'd: 'tis likely you
May be detain'd a captive, and immur'd
Within the precincts of a lonesome dungeon.

ETHELBERTA.

Talk not to me of dangers, I despise them.
Say, hast thou not beheld the bold sea-eagle,
When her dear young one from the rock hath fall'n,
Descend undaunted to the roaring main,
Dash with her throbbing breast the waves asunder,
To snatch the nestling from the ravenous shark!
And would'st thou have me pause and hesitate
To act the mother's part? Let us retire,
And seek for Anselm to attend
And guide my footsteps to the tyrant's tent.

[*Exeunt*]

Enter Sir Alexander and Anselm.

SIR ALEXANDER.

Yes, Anselm, I confess I glory in
These children---their abrupt departure wakes
At once my wonder and delight! Say, has
It not a relish of the antique manners,
Some proud resemblance of the Roman mind?

ANSELM.

This mutual dedication of themselves
To certain death will ornament our annals.

SIR ALEXANDER.

As torrents feed the river, so my sons
Swell the strong current of my country's fame.

OF BERWICK.

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ANSELM.

You also share your part in this sublime
Transaction.

SIR ALEXANDER.

The renown is their's, and mine
Is the distress.—My scene in this deep drama
Is to bid my archers shoot their arrows
Where my defenceless sons will be expos'd
To their full rage.—Alas! I fear, good father,
I have not virtue equal to the task.

ANSELM.

Virtue is ever found superior to
The rugged task; and, like the water-plant,
Ascends still higher than the swelling flood.

SIR ALEXANDER.

Was ever father so severely tried?

ANSELM.

Image to yourself that you are acting
In sight of ~~angels~~ and immortal spirits,
And thro' the scenery that darkens round
Look up, as to the sun that breaks the cloud,
Look up unto th' approving smile of Heav'n!

SIR ALEXANDER.

Sometimes think the tyrant will relent.

ANSELM.

He's not of English birth.

THE SIEGE

SIR ALEXANDER.

Of that you may be certain :

Humanity adorns the English soldier ;
 It is the wholesome gale that ventilates
 Their heart, from the low subaltern up to
 The royal youth who now in Gallia leads
 His valiant band--

ANSELM.

From Norway is he not,
 This wretch who outrages a parent's feelings?

SIR ALEXANDER.

Ev'n so.--A pirate on the northern seas,
 His skill and matchless courage lifted him
 To fame: and being by distress of weather
 Driv'n on the English coast, the warlike Edward,
 Dazzled by his enterprising spirit,
 Gave him to command the troops that now invest us.

ANSELM.

But tell me, has your sons' abrupt departure
 Yet reach'd the ear of hapless Ethelberta?

SIR ALEXANDER.

I know not that.--I must not now approach
 Her presence; her unbounded sorrow would
 Ill suit the frame of mind that I must now
 Acquire!--Go, holy father, and dispense
 The balm of comfort to her bleeding soul
 I must confer with Donaldson. [Exit Anselm.]

Enter Donaldson.

OF BERWICK.

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DONALDSON.

Your commands have been attended to, and
Now the town is disencumber'd of its
Numbers---The wide northern gate recoiling,
Pour'd forth a length'ning train.---The aged warriors
Pass'd on in mournful silence.---This dismissal
Which mark'd their inutility, appear'd
To humble and degrade them..

SIR ALEXANDER.

'Tis a cruel

But necessary order on my part---
Yet then these aged and once active men
May haply in a few short days return,
And then resume their wonted occupations,
Habits and customs, which they now forego---
But never shall I meet with comfort more---
My sons!- my sons!

DONALDSON.

Next in long order mov'd
A female band, while many a pensive wife
Threw back a frequent glance of fond regard.

SIR ALEXANDER.

'Tis well.---Your diligence demands my thanks,
The truce will in two hours expire.---I must
Prepare me for the sad, the solemn task
Imperious duty has impos'd upon me.---

THE SIEGE

'Tis time the men ascend th' embattled walls,
In act to hurl the arrowy war below.

DONALDSON.

I left the men assembling in the square.

SIR ALEXANDER.

Oh! wou'd that, with the safety of this town,
Which to my latest moment I'll defend,
I might include the safety of my children.

[Exit

SCENE, *the Enemy's Camp.*

Enter Ethelberta and Anselm.

SENTINEL to ETHELBERTA.

Arrest your daring footsteps!

ETHELBERTA.

Your uplifted

Weapon frights not her, to whose misfortunes
Death were welcome.—I am Ethelberta.

*(The Sentinel returns the sabre into
the scabbard.)*

Haply in some far distant hamlet sits
Your mother brooding o'er your absence, all
In tears; Oh! think of her, and lead me to
My sons.

SENTINEL.

Beneath yon tent the captive youths

Abide.

ETHELBERTA.

Inform your General, that the wretched
Ethelberta humbly begs an audience. [*Exit Sentinel.*
(*As Ethelberta and Anselm approach the tent*
Archibald and Valentine rush out.)

ETHELBERTA.

Marvel not at my appearance, my bleeding
Bosom demanded this sad interview.

ARCHIBALD.

We're ever bound to you for this new proof
Of your affection.

VALENTINE.

Have you seen the General?

ETHELBERTA.

I've ask'd a conference—I wait the answer.

VALENTINE.

Be sure you let him know that we did not
Urge or prompt you to demand an audience.

ETHELBERTA.

Is it then criminal in me to own
A Mother's feelings?

ARCHIBALD.

It is beneath the dignity
Of Ethelberta to confer with him.

ETHELBERTA.

Say, what dignity belongs to a wretch
Like me?

THE SIEGE

VALENTINE.

His ear is steel'd against compassion,
Nor do we wish to live.

ETHELBERTA.

Why, Valentine,
This contempt of life? would you not live to
Save me from distraction?—Is the cruelty
That breathes within the General's tent
Contagious? are my children grown insensible
To their afflicted Mother?

VALENTINE (*Embracing her knees.*)

Think not so

Unjustly of us.

ETHELBERTA.

Oh! I think you both
Love me, or I shou'd wish to be the dust
Beneath your feet.

Enter an Officer.

OFFICER.

The General now in council
Waits your attendance.

*Exeunt Ethelberta, Anselm,
and Officer.*

VALENTINE.

Sooner would the sea-cliff
Stoop to the sinking mariner, than will
The tyrant bend to her imploring voice;
I mean his mercy will not reach us both.

OF BERWICK.

55

What if Ethelberta shou'd return, and
Bring with her commands for your releasement?

ARCHIBALD.

I wou'd reject the despicable mercy.
Has not our mutual vow to Heav'n ascended?
Yes, brother, both must be releas'd, or both
Consign'd to death! *Enter Officer.*

OFFICER.

The General bids me lead
You to the fatal spot, with orders that
You should immediately be fasten'd to
The summit of the pillars.

ARCHIBALD and VALENTINE.

We obey. *[Exeunt.]*

SCENE.—*The place where pillars are erected; Men
with ropes, &c.*

FIRST MAN.

I relish not this barb'rous employment;
It pains me to behold these ligaments
With which we soon must bind the valiant youths.

SECOND MAN.

'Tis said the Mother now is with the General,
Imploring for her sons.

FIRST MAN.

I fear in vain!
Behold, they now approach.

Enter Archibald, Valentine, Officer, and Soldiers.

With great reluctance

Do I perform this office.

ARCHIBALD.

My good friend,

Discharge your duty: leave the rest to Heaven!

ETHELBERTA, *behind the scenes.*

Lead, lead me to those dear unfortunate sons.

Enter Ethelberta and Anselm.

ETHELBERTA.

Inhuman wretches! check your dreadful office,

This sight appals me.

ARCHIBALD.

Still, oh still be comforted!

We suffer more for your sake than our own.

ETHELBERTA.

Was it for this I rear'd you with such care?

Was it for this I watch'd your waking virtues,

And kindled at the dawn of your celestial mind?

VALENTINE.

We were born to die.

ETHELBERTA.

Had gradual illness

Stol'n on you as ye faded in my arms,

Or had ye fall'n in battle, then I shou'd,

Like many, many more unfortunate mothers,

Have mournfully submitted; but this outrage,

This indignity---

OF BERWICK.

57

VALENTINE.

Affects me not, I am
Proud to fall in such a cause.

ETHELBERTA, *to Anselm.*

Did I not
Fall at the tyrant's feet; did I not bathe
Them with my tears? Like the unheeding rock
He stood unmov'd. The stranger Pity knew not
The dark avenue to his heart.

ANSELM.

The king of terrors,
Death, comes like a friendly angel
In a noble cause.

ARCHIBALD.

'Tis as the holy
Father says. The cause for which we die brightens
The darken'd hour: it is the cause that dignifies
Those ignominious instruments; that turns
These fatal pillars into pyramids
Proclaiming our eternal fame.

ETHELBERTA.

Who would
Not glory in such children? Yes, ye are
My boast, my honour, my delight. I first led
Your infant footsteps to the path of virtue:
Indulge the fond idea, haply this
Sublime enthusiasm flows from me.

THE SIEGE

VALENTINE.

Speak ever thus, and be the Heroine
Of this conflicting hour.

ARCHIBALD.

Methought! as thus
You spoke, a current of new ardour gush'd.
Upon my throbbing heart.

ETHELBERTA.

Be not deceived,
The momentary gleam of triumph's past;
To glory's touch succeeds tormenting fear,
And Nature gives me up to grief again.

Enter Officer

OFFICER.

The General bids me urge you to retire.

ETHELBERTA.

Does he prohibit this short interview?
This last dear horror of a sad farewell?

(Leans overpower'd upon Anselm.)

OFFICER.

The General also says, that one of these
Youths may return, and that the choice remains
With you.

ETHELBERTA. *(suddenly raising up her head.)*

Ah! were I to absolve the life
Of one, say by that act should I not condemn
The other to the fate that threatens him?

OFFICER.

Reflect, that by these means you will prevent
Th' entire extinction of your name.

ETHELBERTA.

Your reasoning
Touches not a mother's breast.——While I behold
My sons as now they stand before me, and
Recal their virtues, their invariable
Affection tow'ards their mother, and the concord
Of their congenial minds, the interweaving
Harmony of colouring, that composes
The texture of their mutual life, my heart
Blends, and unites the two, and my fond eyes
Behold but one dear son!

*(Archibald and Valentine throw themselves at her
feet, while Ethelberta hangs over them.)*

ARCHIBALD *(rising.)*

Kind, pitying father,
We intrust her to your care: Oh comfort her!

ANSELM.

Mark this hallow'd symbol of our dread belief:

(Holding up the cross that hangs at his side.)

By this I swear I will administer
To her relief, and shed upon her sorrow,
That Gilead balm, Religion only can
Supply: from thence alone can comfort flow.

ETHELBERTA.

Who talks of comfort? Say, will not these pillars

Rise to my mind in every place, to frighten
 Comfort from me? In such a state, comfort
 Wou'd be impiety, leave, leave me with
 Despair. Oh! would to Heav'n that in this conflict
 Of life and sorrow, sorrow might prevail,
 That I might fall death-smitten on this spot,
 And in one grave be buried with my sons!

OFFICER.

The time expires, the truce will shortly end,
 The war will be renew'd, and from yon town
 The arrows then will fly.

ETHELBERTA.

To pierce my children--
 Tort'ring madness harbours in the thought.

OFFICER.

That devious path-way leads not to the town.

ETHELBERTA.

Forgive, I was a moment scarce myself,
 And still a dimness hangs across my sight.

Where are my sons? *(they go up to*

Forbear, forbear to weep,

I see my presence but enfeebles them:

'Tis cruelty to linger, then resolv'd

I tear myself away. Oh! God of mercy,

Spread o'er my children thy protecting shield!

[Exit with An

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT THE FOURTH.

.....

SCENE.—*The Archers mounted on the walls, expecting the word of command.*

Enter Sir Alexander, Juliana, and Donaldson.

SIR ALEXANDER to DONALDSON.

To your command do I entrust those archers;
I'll thro' the subterraneous passage with
A chosen number issue on the plain!
My bosom burns to meet the tyrant, and
Provoke him to a single combat. How
Is he distinguish'd?

DONALDSON.

A bright scarlet mantle
Floats around his armour.

SIR ALEXANDER.

The impulse of an
Injur'd father will add vigour to this arm
But Ethelberta is not yet return'd.

DONALDSON.

Her visit to the camp surprises me.

THE SIEGE

SIR ALEXANDER.

It moves not my surprize, for when th' affections
Of her soul are rous'd, no fear, no danger—

JULIANA.

She comes---mark how her tortur'd mind speaks thro'
Th' expressive eye. *Enter Ethelberta and Anselm.*

ETHELBERTA.

I've spoke in vain.

SIR ALEXANDER.

I do

Not yet believe he will proceed to such
Extreme barbarity.

ETHELBERTA.

I saw the pillars,

I saw the men with chains and instruments
Prepar'd. Ere now your sons are bound to the
Lofty pillars with their bosoms bare, to catch
The arrows which these men are now in act
To shoot, and only wait your terrible
Command.

SIR ALEXANDER.

Ah! leave me then to my dread duty,
Retire, retire!—The truce is just expiring.
The trembling sands have almost
Run their hour.

ETHELBERTA, *kneeling.*

See at your feet the mother of your children,

Who thro' th' unvaried course of long attachment
 Has shewn she's not unworthy of your choice.
 Oh! how I glory'd in that day, when first
 You call'd me your's! and do I live to curse
 That day?

SIR ALEXANDER.

Rise, Ethelberta, cease entreating—
 Awake each virtue that surrounds your heart!
 Elevate your mind, and dare to meet the
 Approaching trial; think that now you stand
 As in a solemn temple, and forbear
 With vain complaining accents to disturb
 The awful service that is now beginning.

ETHELBERTA.

These proud exalted sentiments suit well
 The breast that's fed with glory's turgid vapour:
 My simple heart feels nothing but affection.

SIR ALEXANDER.

Would'st have me be a traitor to my country?

ETHELBERTA.

Dar'st thou assume the sacred name of Father,
 And can'st thou unappall'd behold that scene?

SIR ALEXANDER.

The voice that dares dissuade me from my duty
 Is to my careless ear an empty sound.
 Mark me, Ethelberta! I'll not disgrace
 The school of war in which I have been train'd:

My parting soul shall fly unsullied
Into the bosom of my ancestry,
And at my death my honour be convey'd
Immaculate, into the ashes of
My grave!

DONALDSON (*taking up the hour-glass.*)

The last remaining sands are hast'ning fast
Away.

SIR ALEXANDER.

Now bid the archers draw their bows.

ETHELBERTA.

One moment yet delay,

SIR ALEXANDER.

Ring out th' alarm-bell.

(*Ethelberta faints, and is carried out by
Juliana and Anselm.*)

*The besiegers scale the walls, and are repulsed, and
pursued; the scene then changes to the place
where the pillars are erected, where Sir Alex-
ander meets the General.*

SIR ALEXANDER.

Well met! My children's blood cries out revenge!
New youthful vigour gushes on my breast,
And vengeance, like th' exterminating angel,
Rides on this sword.

(*They fight, the General falls.*)

Enter Ethelberta.

Your sons are now aveng'd :
See, Ethelberta, where the monster lies !

ETHELBERTA.

'Tis nobly done, now thou'rt indeed a father :
But gaudy exultation ill becomes us,
The dreaded pillars we have not survey'd,
I'll hasten to the spot, and dare th' event.

(they go to the pillars.)

No children meet these fond enquiring eyes.

SIR ALEXANDER.

It seems as he relented of his purpose.

ETHELBERTA.

My heart presageful scorns the flatt'ring hope :
Mark how the pillars are o'erspread with arrows,
And some that strew the ground are stain'd with blood.

(Takes up one and advances towards the stage.)

This dread informer tells a horrid tale.

(Shouts at a distance.)

Whence that tumultuous noise ?

SIR ALEXANDER.

Haply my valiant
Men are now returning from their victory.

ETHELBERTA.

What's victory to me without my sons ?

*(Nearer shouts, then the troops enter with
Archibald and Valentine.)*

Transporting sight! I'm well repaid for all
The heart-pangs of this agonizing day.

SIR ALEXANDER.

How did ye escape the flight of arrows
That wing'd from yonder lofty battlements?

ARCHIBALD.

Chain'd to the pillars, to our doom resign'd,
We saw the angry weapons fly around.

VALENTINE.

Yet then, beneath the spreading canopy
Of danger, still did we remain untouch'd.

ETHELBERTA.

Some hov'ring angel, with benignant hand,
Averted from your breast the crowding darts.
Yet tell me all! Oh! say, by what bless'd means
Am I become the happiest of mothers?

VALENTINE.

As the enemy retreated from the walls,
Orders were issued (shou'd we be alive)
To drag us back again in chains as captives;
But our bold troops, with hasty step advancing,
By the resistless effort of Donaldson
We are restored to safety and to you.

ETHELBERTA to Donaldson.

Take, take a mother's thanks: this gallant deed
Of thine, brave youth, yes, it is here engrav'd.
Deep in the last recesses of my heart.

OF BERWICK.

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SIR ALEXANDER.

Thanks to my sons, my matchless sons, who on
This memorable day have pour'd fresh lustre
On our name and on our country. Dear boys,
Oblivion's gulph shall ne'er entomb your story,
While history, to time's remotest bound,
Her stream majestic shall thro' ages roll:
Like kindred flowers that on one stem arise,
You on her margin shall for ever glow.

[*Exeunt.*]

END OF THE FOURTH AND LAST ACT.

THE EPILOGUE.

Written by the AUTHOR;

And Spoken by Mrs. Pope.

*AS now I come unarm'd, without a dart,
I fear I can't presume to touch your heart;
But your indulgence, here so often found,
Has on my heart, at least, imprest a wound;
A sacred wound! which I am proud to feel,
Which, if I know myself, will never heal.*

*Methinks I hear you say, Dear Mrs. Pope,
Amidst what mould'ring annals did you grope,
And dig, from out the mine of tragic ore,
A tale unfashion'd from the days of yore---
Where two wild Boys take such prodigious pains,
And are determin'd to be hung in chains?*

*Goes your complaint to this?--that we display
A tale unsuited to the modern day?
Does this fam'd Island then produce no more
The bright achievements of the days of yore?
Avert the thought!--still ancient Glory tow'rs,
And warm heroic Virtue still is ours!
Ev'n here, as I the martial theme pursue,
Full many a mother rises to my view,
Whose ardent Sons domestic comforts fly,
To seek th' advancing foe with kindling eye,
And, braving the full force of hostile pow'r,
Add to their Country's wreath another flow'r.*

*No station, titles, here exemption claim ;
 All feel alike the sympathetic flame :
 E'en SHE whose life adds splendour to a Throne,
 Whom ev'ry British heart delights to own---
 E'en SHE beholds her brave undaunted SON,*
 In early youth, the path of danger run !*

*Happy the realm, in this convulsive age,
 Whose tragic scenes are only on the stage !
 Calamity extends her wither'd hand,
 And drags her harrow o'er a neighb'ring land ;
 While you, reclin'd beneath a softer sway,
 Bask and enjoy a bright unclouded day.*

*Depress'd by civic storms, deform'd with woes,
 Stung by the pangs of agonizing throes,
 A nation falls.---'Tis yours to still the storm,
 To raise with gen'rous arm her bleeding form,
 To soothe her shame, administer relief,
 To close the gushing artery of grief,
 To cast a veil o'er each disgraceful seam,
 And once more lift her to her own esteem.*

*This godlike act, which is reserv'd for you,
 With glowing zeal and confidence pursue :
 This act from future times shall homage claim,
 Extend your worth, and consecrate your fame !*

* The Duke of York was then before Valenciennes.



[71]

THE
WELCH HEIRESS,
A
COMEDY.



TO THE

EARL OF HARCOURT.

AS I have attempted to write a Comedy at the flattering instigation of your Lordship, the following scenes have a natural claim to your protection. If, when you prompted and encouraged me to court the Comic Muse, you had imparted to me at the same time some share of your instinctive penetration into character---of your elegant but impressive ridicule of

fashionable levities---had you consigned to my hand the clue that guides you in the chace and detection of folly, through the intricate windings of her labyrinth, I should have presented to you a Comedy more worthy of your attention. Such as it is, it offers me an opportunity of publicly acknowledging the high value I set upon a friendship, which I have had the happiness of enjoying several years.

EDWARD JERNINGHAM.

ADVERTISEMENT
OF THE
PUBLISHER,
TO
THE THIRD EDITION.

Jan. 18, 1796.

THE favourable reception this Comedy has met with in the Study, and the increasing demand for it, induce us to believe, that the Author too hastily withdrew it from the Stage : the Character of the **MILITARY LAWYER**, which gave offence, being now suppressed without any injury to the general effect, confirms our opinion. We are happy in being able to prefix to this edition, a correct copy of the Lines written on the occasion, by our literary Nestor, the **EARL of ORFORD**, which, in giving his approbation of this Comedy, display a sprightliness which seldom accompanies so advanced a time of life.

TO
MR. JERNINGHAM,
ON THE
COMEDY.

THE Nymphs of Pindus have in various ways,
My Friend, appear'd propitious to your lays:
But tho' Calliope and Clio, too,
And POLLY-HYMNIA have been kind to you,
Wisely you acted, when resign'd their charms,
You threw yourself into Thalia's arms:
The solemn Sisters on your wishes smil'd,
But the gay Girl has given you a true Child.

ORFORD.

This Prologue, which follows, was too late for the representation of the Comedy; it was written by an amiable young Clergyman, of the name of PRITCHARD, since deceased: his loss is the more regretted, as he was much distinguished for Piety, Taste, and Genius.

THERE liv'd at Argos once a youth of fame,
(So Horace tells) and Lycas was his name,
Who, (if there is a joy which mad-men know,
And such as madness only can bestow)
By the strong force of its prevailing pow'r,
Wak'd to fresh transport every new-born hour.
Each visionary scene that fancy drew,
His mind embodied, and confirm'd it true.
Oft, in the height of his distemper's rage,
He saw, or fancy'd that he saw, a stage;

Where as he heard the self-imagin'd sound,
And trod, or thought he trod, dramatic ground ;
Where, with nice skill in imitative art,
Each son of Thespis seem'd to play his part,
The fond conceit drew down his loud applause,
As tho' reality had been the cause,
And ev'ry member, head, hands, lips, and eyes,
Profess'd their praise, and testified surprize.

If such the charm where fancy gave delight,
Let truth, not fiction, plead our cause to night ;
And, as I come to take a nearer view,
Pleading for him who strives to pleasure you,
Oh ! may propitious Beauty* smile reward !
May Science† favour, and the Gods‡ regard !

Sons of renown, the bards of ancient days,
Wore on their heads a circling crown of bays,
These bloom eternal, for to them belong
The grace, the pride, the energies of song ;
The tale well-told, the animated line,
The glow of sentiment, and thought divine ;
Yet still there blossoms many a virgin flow'r,
On the fair spot where Genius rears her bow'r ;
Of these our bard presents before your view,
One of a simple but unsully'd hue ;
Should the mild off'ring kind acceptance share,
'Tis your's to weave the crown, and his to wear.

* To the Boxes. † To the Pit. ‡ To the Galleries.

PROLOGUE.

Written by JOHN TAYLOR, Esq.

Spoken by Mr. Barrymore.

*"SHOOT Folly as it flies," Such is the game,
At which, 'tis said, the Comic Muse should aim;
The darker passions that the heart deform,
And spread o'er groaning states the moral storm,
Are pompous themes the sportive Maid resigns,
To swell her solemn Sister's lofty lines.
Yet when she fain would strike such tow'ring prey,
The serious Damsel takes the safest way;
Tho' proud yet prudent—wounding guilt too high,
To wake in you the self-reproaching sigh!
In sluggish apathy you careless sit,
Nor smart for crimes that you could ne'er commit:
But, in the comic province, who shall dare
To touch the faults that you may haply share?
For conscience then may strengthen the appeal,
And bid you crush what forces her to feel.*

*For Virtue, zealous and disdaining awe,
E'en fear'd by those too mighty for the law,*

ie Stage, through ev'ry station, Vice has try'd,
nd honest Satire has her lash applied.
fence, while the Comic Muse must fear to wound,
he still is doom'd to course o'er beaten ground ;
Again bring forward what too well you know,
Or, if a novelty, some monster shew.

To night our Bard, who long has struck the lyre,
A modest minstrel of the plaintive choir,
Attempts for once a harmless laugh to raise,
More dreading censure than presuming praise.
One point we fairly in his cause may plead---
For know, he dares to touch the scribbling breed ;
Dares strip from dull conceit its bold pretence,
And prove an Author may be void of sense.
Then let your candour countenance the grace
That freely owns the follies of his race ;
And sure our Bard e'en malice need not fear,
(Could malice lurk in specious ambush here)
E'en she may yield her pittance of applause
To him whose vent'rous pen a brother draws ;
For while thus sportive on a scribbling elf,
Our simple poet may deride himself.



CHARACTERS.

Lord Melcourt, - - - - Mr. Palmer.
Mr. Fashion, - - - - Mr. Barrymore.
Sir Pepper Plinlimmon, - - Mr. Dodd.
Mr. Fancy, - - - - Mr. R. Palmer.
Mr. Phrensy, - - - - Mr. Bannister, Jun.
Lady Bellair, - - - - Miss Farren.
Lady Plinlimmon, - - - - Miss Pope.
Miss Plinlimmon, - - - - Mrs. Jordan.

SCENE---Melcourt-Hall, near Town.

THE

WELCH HEIRESS.

ACT THE FIRST.

.....

Enter Lady Bellair—Mr. Fashion.

MR. FASHION.

I AM happy at your Ladyship's arrival. We expected you last night.

LADY BELLAIR. I purposely avoided coming last night, that I might not be complicated in the embarrassment of the Welch family's arrival, whom I understand came yesterday. What sort of creatures are they? How many did the caravan consist of? I expect to see the whole race of Shenkin.

MR. FASHION. Do not be alarmed as to their number; I will give your Ladyship a list of the *dramatis personæ*, and a faint sketch of their characters.

LADY BELLAIR. Pray do! for I have seen nobody, not even my brother, the *padrone della casa*.

MR. FASHION. Lord Melcourt, I know, is walked out; I was just enquiring after him. But to return to the subject;—Yesterday evening, the family coach, covered with dust, and much damaged by the toil and length of the journey, waddled up to the hall-door in great labour, and was happily delivered of Sir Pepper Plinlimmon, Lady Plinlimmon, Miss Plinlimmon, and a *femme de chambre*; two servants attended on Welch ponies. The coach, I must inform you, contained originally five persons, but it miscarried on the road of Mr. Taffey, their chaplain, who could not bear the inside of a carriage. He is, however, expected to-morrow, in the basket of some stage-coach.

LADY BELLAIR. I fancy we shall be able to do without Mr. Taffey.

MR. FASHION. Indeed you are mistaken. He is one of the essential personages in our drama, for he is to join the hands of Lord Melcourt and Miss Plinlimmon.

LADY BELLAIR. What sort of a thing is the girl?

MR. FASHION. She is very well as to beauty;

her shape elegantly and harmoniously formed, but when in motion, ungraceful. Her mind is a compound of ignorance and information, like the waving branches that give a checquered kind of light. She made us laugh last night at supper with the childish simplicity of her questions, and sometimes she excited our admiration at the quickness of her repartee, and the solidity of her judgment; in a word, she appears to be an inspired idiot.

LADY BELLAIR. Now let me have the portrait of Sir Pepper.

MR. FASHION. Sir Pepper is a plain, unassuming man, subject at times to a warmth of temper, and whose local train of impoverished ideas are quite unsuitable to the scene he is now entering upon, and to the company with which he is now to associate. His mind has received a peculiar bias respecting the prophecies that have been floating of late, and he is almost convinced the world will be at an end before his daughter has brought Lord Melcourt a son and heir.

LADY BELLAIR. I confess I like the whimsicality of that notion; it will serve to amuse us.

MR. FASHION. As for Lady Plinlimmon, she has a considerable share of vanity. She imagines

she has a refined taste for literature, that she is a supreme judge of painting, and—

LADY BELLAIR. Oh! then she is intolerable.

MR. FASHION. By no means. There is a broad good-humour about her which makes her inoffensive. She looks with impatience for the honour of cementing an acquaintance with your Ladyship.

LADY BELLAIR. I think from your description, it will not be unentertaining to pass a day or two with these Welch Emigrants. But does my brother seem happy at his approaching nuptials?

MR. FASHION. Yesterday he seemed at first overcome by the invasion of these Vandals; but his native mirth rallied, and at the close of the evening he was himself again. But here he comes.

Enter Lord Melcourt.

LORD MELCOURT. Sister, you are welcome; you look in high beauty. The elegant circles in town will be eclipsed without you. Have you seen our new kindred?

LADY BELLAIR. Not yet. Mr. Fashion has been giving me a slight sketch of them.

LORD MELCOURT. Well, I am ready to consign Sir Pepper, and Lady Plinlimmon, to the full

discharge of your raillery; but spare, I entreat you, my shepherdess of the Alps.

LADY BELLAIR. Never fear; never fear.

LORD MELCOURT. Lady Plinlimmon looks for your arrival with all the flutter of anxious expectation. Your fame, like an artful prologue, has smoothed the way to a kind reception: she talks of you as the paragon of excellence; she will study your whole person: observe every motion, attitude, and every article of your dress.

MR. FASHION. Lady Bellair may be said to be a capital picture from the gallery of fashion, for Lady Plinlimmon to copy.

LADY BELLAIR. I will venture to say, without the impeachment of vanity, that the copy will not come up to the merit of the original. But tell me, brother, don't you feel, independent of the charms of your young bride, an uncommon elasticity of mind in the removal of the incumbrances which this marriage will effect?

LORD MELCOURT. Yes. Upon that ground I plant the standard of my gaudiest streamer. I have had a private conference with Sir Pepper, and his immediate relinquishing of his Brecknockshire estate will enable me to part with my Irish acres, and satisfy all my noisy claimants; who, like a voracious pack of hounds, have chased

me from hill to dale, and notwithstanding the windings of excuses, and the intricate mazes of delay, would have soon overtaken me, had not this golden shower from the Welch mountains put an end to the chase.

LADY BELLAIR. Bravo! Are we to expect any more company?

LORD MELCOURT. I have invited my friend Fancy, the miniature-painter. I expect also Phrensy, the poet; whom you have often heard me talk of; he will suit Lady Plinlimmon, and their mutual eccentricities will divert us.

MR. FASHION. I am glad that oddity will be added to the group; you have frequently amused me with anecdotes concerning him. When will he be here?

LORD MELCOURT. I expect him every minute. He writes word he will be here to day, but begs his coming may be a secret; and, as he is not personally known to any body but myself, he desires to assume the name of Tombstone.

MR. FASHION. What a whim; what can he mean?

LORD MELCOURT. Most likely he is afraid of his creditors—however, do not betray him to the rest of our society. But here come our Welch relatives. (*Enter Sir Pepper Plinlimmon, Lady*

Plinlimmon; and Miss Plinlimmon). Give me leave to present Lady Bellair, to your Ladyship.

LADY PLINLIMMON. Independent of the connection that is taking place between our families, I rejoice at the opportunity that now offers of commencing an acquaintance with Lady Bellair.

LADY BELLAIR. Your Ladyship does me a great deal of honour. I hope Sir Pepper, you will like this part of the world sufficiently to engage you to stay among us some time.

LADY PLINLIMMON. What ease! What elegance! (*Aside.*)

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. I should wish to enjoy your Ladyship's society, but I am rather disposed to return as soon as I can; for if, as Nos-tradamus says, we are in the fifth act, I should like to be at home when the curtain drops.

LADY PLINLIMMON. Dear Sir Pepper, do not cloud the splendour of Lady Bellair's mind, with the dark mists of your odious prophecies.

LADY BELLAIR. I beg your Ladyship will let Sir Pepper say what he chooses, I am not easily alarmed: credulity is not my foible. But this is a conversation of too severe a cast for our young

bride: you, my dear, may send your expecting eye through a long and gay perspective.

MISS PLINLIMMON. So I do! I expect to have fine cloaths, to go to a great many balls, and I expect to be married!

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. Your Ladyship will excuse the wild simplicity of my daughter.

LADY BELLAIR. Oh! I am a great admirer of artless simplicity; it is as rare to be met with as sincerity.

LADY PLINLIMMON. When she has exchanged the rude breezes of the mountain where she was bred, for the gentler gales of polished society, she will assimilate with the soft elegance of her new situation.

MR. FASHION. Lady Bellair herself could not have invented a metaphor more happily allusive.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. My wife is very metaphorical.

MISS PLINLIMMON. Yes! we have all our different calls; mamma is metaphorical---papa is propheticall---I am comical---the old curate, near Plinlimmon Castle, is classicall, and his wife is dropsical!

LADY PLINLIMMON. You must check this careless volubility.

* LORD MELCOURT. Suppose, gentlemen, we leave the ladies to confer by themselves. Will you allow me, Sir Pepper, to shew you the Vandyke I mentioned last night?

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. If you please.

. (*Exeunt* Sir Pepper, Mr. Fashion, and Lord Melcourt.

: LADY PLINLIMMON. I should wish your Ladyship not to be impressed with an idea that my daughter-in-law is deficient in the great outline of education, though she has not yet received the last touchings of embellishment. I myself have been her tutoress, and have read to her several of the best English authors.

. MISS PLINLIMMON. And all the Welch poets.

LADY BELLAIR. I am persuaded Miss Plinlimmon is deficient in nothing that is absolutely requisite for the station she is going to ascend: as for those delicate finishings, that fashionable elegance demands---

: LADY PLINLIMMON. Your Ladyship's society will supply. I consign this young Alpine plant to your care: 'tis yours to give the pliant branches their proper direction, and to breathe on them a playful air of easy negligence. With your permission I will now withdraw for the pur-

pose of my girl's imbibing from your Ladyship those nameless graces you only can bestow.

(Exit Lady Plinlimmon.)

MISS PLINLIMMON. What are those things mama says you are to bestow on me?

LADY BELLAIR. My friendship! And you in return must have some friendship for me, and speak to me with confidence upon every point that relates to your marriage with my brother. By what he has said to me, I find that he is extremely attached to you: I hope his attachment will meet with an equal return on your part.

MISS PLINLIMMON. That is as it may be.

LADY BELLAIR. I am sure Lord Melcourt is reckoned by all the ladies very handsome, amiable, entertaining, and—

MISS PLINLIMMON. I know all that, and I should be very partial to him, if—

LADY BELLAIR. If what, my dear?

MISS PLINLIMMON. If—

LADY BELLAIR. Has he done any thing to offend you?

MISS PLINLIMMON. No! but he has done nothing to please me.

LADY BELLAIR. Does he appear to neglect you? I recollect he was uncommonly assiduous in writing to you last winter.

MISS PLINLIMMON. Oh yes! he frequently wrote to me, and he used to say in his letters, that when I should come to Melcourt Hall, we should wander through the groves together, and he would say such tender things to me by the river-side. Now we were by the river-side yesterday evening, and scarce one word did he say to me, but conversed with my papa about the winding of his river; egad! I wish it was wound round his neck.

LADY BELLAIR. Fie, child! You must not imagine that Lord Melcourt's attention is to be totally devoted to you.

MISS PLINLIMMON. Am I then not to expect any share of his conversation? Is there to be no time for wooing? no whispering? no toying? no innocent anticipation?

LADY BELLAIR. Miss Plinlimmon, the manufacturing of love in Wales may perhaps be as coarse as a sackcloth, but in this part of the world, the cupids of fashion weave the fine texture with a light and invisible hand.

MISS PLINLIMMON. Invisible indeed! But if I am never to partake of his company, what am I come here for? what shall I be the better for being married to him? where is the advantage?

LADY BELLAIR. You will obtain the advantage

of his name and title; you will move in a higher sphere.

MISS PLINLIMMON. But I always understood, that wedlock was a kind of travelling through life together?

LADY BELLAIR. So it is, but then it is like travelling in the double stage-coach; you go the same journey together, without seeing or incommoding one another.

MISS PLINLIMMON. I hate the double stage-coach; I like a vis-a-vis much better. However, if Lord Melcourt does not become more assiduous, he may be supplanted---Fashion is much more attentive.

Enter Lord Melcourt.

LORD MELCOURT. I ask pardon for interrupting you; but the odd character I spoke of is arrived; he begs to see me in private; he is now coming.

LADY BELLAIR. We will retire immediately.

(Exit Lady Bellair and

Miss Plinlimmon.)

Enter Servant---announces Mr. Tombstone.---Enter

Mr. Phrensy.

MR. PHRENSY. Your servant---I am obliged to you for your invitation---I have an epithalamium for the occasion; shall I read it?

LORD MELCOURT. All in good time; tell me first why you assume another name.

MR. PHRENSY. You shall hear, but do not betray me.

LORD MELCOURT. You may rely upon me.

MR. PHRENSY. Shall not I read the epithalamium first?

LORD MELCOURT. No, no! I am impatient for your history.

MR. PHRENSY. Well, you shall hear it---but I am certain you will be pleased with the epithalamium.

LORD MELCOURT. I have no doubt, but let me know the secret motive of your changing your name, before we are interrupted.

MR. PHRENSY. Do you think your servants will know me?

LORD MELCOURT. I have an entire new set.

MR. PHRENSY. That makes me happy.

LORD MELCOURT. Was it the fear of your creditors?

MR. PHRENSY. No such terrestrial motive urged me to assume another name: this liberty I have taken with myself flows from a more sublime cause than the apprehension of bailiffs! I will now disclose the mystery---unless you choose to hear the epithalamium first---

LORD MELCOURT. Do not trifle any longer, but let me know the purport of this mysterious conduct.

MR. PHRENSY. Envy, which attends living authors, has pursued me with great implacability.

LORD MELCOURT. I do not recollect that ever I heard your works censured.

MR. PHRENSY. Likely enough—censure would have excited notice—notice would have led to observation—observation to justice—justice to admiration—no, no! Envy, My Lord, took another method with me, she somehow or other, contrived to breathe over me and my works, a dread repose. The warehouse where my productions are deposited, resembles a family vault, where all my numerous progeny are at rest! And are only distinguished from one another by labels—such as Phrensy's comedies—Phrensy's tragedies—Phrensy's satires—Phrensy's—

LORD MELCOURT. But what has all this to do with the changing of your name?

MR. PHRENSY. I am now coming to the mark: my friends have soothed me with the idea, that posterity will do me justice—that posterity will say to these sleepers arise! Then will my comedies, my tragedies, my odes, shake off their dust, and dazzle the admiring world.

LORD MELCOURT. What is all this to the purpose?

MR. PHRENSY. You shall hear—instead of patiently waiting the natural process of time, I conceived a stratagem of anticipating my triumphs, and of taking a short cut to posterity.

LORD MELCOURT. How do you mean—by cutting your throat?

MR. PHRENSY. 'Tis done, 'tis done---

LORD MELCOURT. What's done?

MR. PHRENSY. I have killed myself; that is to say, I have given out that I am dead. This is the reason for changing my name—envy was never played such a trick before—

LORD MELCOURT. But why take the melancholy name of Tombstone?

MR. PHRENSY. That is to keep me in recollection that I am dead.

LORD MELCOURT. There is sense in that.

MR. PHRENSY. But this stratagem, my Lord, has not yet answered my sanguine expectation.

LORD MELCOURT. How so?

MR. PHRENSY. I have been three weeks dead, and would you believe that there has not been in any of the papers, an elegy, a posthumous puff, or a line in my commendation.

LORD MELCOURT. That is very strange.

MR. PHRENSY. Egad! A tallow-chandler might have slipped out of the world, as easily as I have done.

LORD MELCOURT. How did you insert your death in the papers? for it escaped my notice.

MR. PHRENSY. Simply thus—Yesterday died, universally lamented, the eminent poet, Classical Phrensy, Esq.

LORD MELCOURT. To be sure, nothing could be more simple and modest—but I have an idea, that I think will serve your scheme better—I will have it inserted in the papers, and you shall draw up the paragraph, to this purpose—yesterday the eminent poet, Classical Phrensy, Esq. died suddenly at Melcourt-Hall, where he was on a visit to his friend, Lord Melcourt.

MR. PHRENSY. Very good—excellent conception.

LORD MELCOURT. The circumstance of making your exit at my country-house, during the interesting moment of my nuptials, will give your death an eclat.

MR. PHRENSY. This second edition of my death, with additions, will do admirably, faith; but what will your company say when they shall read the paragraph?

LORD MELCOURT. I shall take particular care that none of them shall see it.

MR. PHRENSY. But what does your Lordship smile at?

LORD MELCOURT. Another idea occurs, which will serve to enrich the paragraph---

MR. PHRENSY. As how?

LORD MELCOURT. Fancy, the miniature-painter, will be here to-day---I shall tell him as a profound secret, that you lie dead in the house, and that it is unknown to the company---and I will beg of him, as you are my friend, to take a faint sketch of you.

MR. PHRENSY. This will, as your Lordship says, enrich the paragraph, which may run thus ---Mr. Phrensy being the intimate friend of Lord Melcourt, an eminent painter from town was sent for, to take a likeness of the great poet.

LORD MELCOURT. Admirable! you have only to whiten your face, and make yourself like a ghost in an opera, the painter shall only peep at you, and then finish the sketch from memory---trust to my contrivance, you shall not be detected.

MR. PHRENSY. I will go and prepare the paragraph. (*Phrensy going, returns.*) Your Lordship then does not wish to hear the epithalamium first?

LORD MELCOURT. No, no ! I expect the painter every minute. (*Exit Mr. Phrensy.*) Self conceit—good humour—with absurdity, are happily blended in that man's composition.

Enter Servant.

SERVANT. Mr. Fancy is arrived—

LORD MELCOURT. Bid him come in.

Enter Mr. Fancy.

MR. FANCY. I wish your Lordship joy ; I flatter myself you have not sent for me to be an idle spectator—I hope I shall have the honour of drawing the bride.

LORD MELCOURT. Most assuredly—the art suffers when you are idle.

MR. FANCY. Have you assembled many of your friends upon this occasion ?

LORD MELCOURT. No—Lady Bellair is come, and Mr. Fashion, and a literary acquaintance of mine, Mr. Tombstone.

MR. FANCY. I never heard of his name.

LORD MELCOURT. He has lived a great deal abroad, he is lately returned from Africa ; I had another ingenious man here, and he was my particular friend, but a sudden death has deprived me of that invaluable person : what I am going to relate, is a secret, nobody is acquainted with the terrible accident, except a confidential ser-

want. Poor Phrensy died suddenly last night; he is now in the house, and is to be removed this evening: I should be happy to have a resemblance of my old friend, and if you would have the goodness to take a hasty sketch of him, you would infinitely oblige me.

MR. FANCY. I can have no objection.

LORD MELCOURT. Let all this transaction be as secret as the grave.

MR. FANCY. You may depend upon me.

Enter Mr. Phrensy, with a paper.

MR. PHRENSY. Here is the paragraph for your inspection.

LORD MELCOURT. (*taking the paper*) I shall look at it another time. Let me have the satisfaction of introducing two gentlemen to one another, who are formed for each other's acquaintance; Mr. Tombstone, let me present you to Mr. Fancy. I must now beg permission to leave you together; I shall return in a few moments.

(*Exit Lord Melcourt.*)

MR. FANCY. I am happy in commencing an acquaintance with so ingenious a gentleman. I should be proud to draw your portrait.

MR. PHRENSY, (*smiling*). You shall, Mr. Fancy, I suppose the bride is to be embellished by your pencil?

MR. FANCY. Of course. But Lord Melcourt did not send for me merely to paint the young lady.

MR. PHRENSY. Your pencil will undoubtedly run through the whole family.

MR. FANCY. Likely enough. But I have another meaning. I am sent for—I am sure Mr. Tombstone may be trusted; and as the first fruits of my friendship for you, I will deposit in your breast a profound secret.

MR. PHRENSY. I will in return communicate to you, the first secret that is whispered in my ear.

MR. FANCY. I have, then, to inform you, that there is a person lies dead in the house, and Lord Melcourt has begged I would just catch a resemblance of his departed friend.

MR. PHRENSY. Who is it?

MR. FANCY. Phrensy, the poet!

MR. PHRENSY. Indeed! Is that great and unrivalled man no more?

MR. FANCY. You are too magnificent in the epithets you apply to Mr. Phrensy.

MR. PHRENSY. By no means! Reflect what an awful task is now imposed upon you! Methinks I see you advance, with sublime emotion, towards the honoured couch that bears the breathless image of that immortal man!

MR. FANCY. But whence this enthusiasm? After all it must be confessed, that the friendship of Lord Melcourt was the highest feather in his cap.

MR. PHRENSY. Talk not to me of feather, or of cap! His head was encircled with laurel, wove by the public hand! For shame, Mr. Fancy, is it thus you revere the illustrious dead?

MR. FANCY. Don't be so warm, Mr. Tombstone, I am perhaps a little ungenerous in speaking against the dead who cannot defend themselves: but tell me dispassionately, do you admire poor Phrensy's writings?

MR. PHRENSY. I do! I know them by heart; have you a mind to hear the sixteenth scene of his tragi-comedy, in six acts, where the Princess---

MR. FANCY. No, no! I will not give you the trouble of repeating your friend's verses.

MR. PHRENSY. My friend's verses! you say right, yes, my intimate friend; he never wrote a line without consulting me.

MR. FANCY. But if he was so dear a friend, how comes it you are not more affected by his death?

MR. PHRENSY. I am astonished, stunned, bewildered at the dreadful secret you disclosed!

When the first impression is subsided, grief will succeed: Lord Melcourt, out of affection for me, secreted the melancholy event, but I begin to feel myself overpowered. (*Goes aside with his handkerchief to his eyes*).

Enter Lord Melcourt.

LORD MELCOURT. What is the matter with Mr. Tombstone?

MR. FANCY. Inadvertently I informed him of the death of Mr. Phrensy, not knowing the intimacy that subsisted between them.

LORD MELCOURT. How could you be so imprudent? (*goes up to Mr. Phrensy*) Dear Tombstone, do not yield to this inordinate affliction.

MR. PHRENSY. How can I command my grief? (*throws his arms round Lord Melcourt's neck.*)

LORD MELCOURT. I take no inconsiderable share in your distress.

MR. PHRENSY. Undoubtedly you do, in losing Mr. Phrensy, you lose your panegyrist—think how often he has regaled your Lordship with the thickest cream of dedication.

LORD MELCOURT. Forbear to remind me, you affect me too much.

MR. FANCY. What a situation I am in! I thought I was invited to the abode of festivity, in-

stead of which, I am come into the house of mourning; I had better return to town

LORD MELCOURT. By no means! When this mutual sympathetic emotion is over, we shall return to our former mirth.

MR. FANCY. Your Lordship appeared very easy and jocund just now.

LORD MELCOURT. You then saw me during the intervals of the first and second paroxysm of grief.

MR. FANCY. Is then your Lordship's affliction methodised into acts like a play, with pauses between the divisions?

LORD MELCOURT. Indeed, Mr. Fancy, this is not a moment for raillery, let me entreat you to leave us, we shall be more composed presently.

MR. FANCY. Well, I will obey your commands!

(Exit.)

(Lord Melcourt and Mr. Phrensy burst into laughing).

LORD MELCOURT. We shall have still more entertainment with the painter, when he has drawn your picture.

MR. PHRENSY. I am impatient for that scene, I will go and prepare myself.

LORD MELCOURT. My valet de chambre, who

has my instructions, and who is in our confidence, will assist and furnish you with whatever is necessary for the purpose. I must now join the company.

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT THE SECOND.

.....

Lord Melcourt—Mr. Fancy, *with a pallet in his hand—a couch at some distance, on which Mr. Phrensy lies, disguised as dead.*

LORD MELCOURT.

SHALL we now approach the venerable remains of the great man?

MR. FANCY. Give me leave to mingle my colours a little.

LORD MELCOURT. I am afraid the task I have imposed upon you is unpleasant: you feel, I

make no doubt, very disagreeable sensations upon this occasion.

MR. FANCY. Not in the least, a lifeless frame does not impress me with any disturbance; I drew Lady Fidget's dead monkey the other day without any kind of perturbation.

LORD MELCOURT. But, Mr. Fancy, do you make no distinction between Lady Fidget's dead monkey, and the remains of my friend?

MR. FANCY. As he was your friend, I respect him; but does your Lordship really think he is worthy of those encomiums, that you and Mr. Tombstone so profusely bestowed upon him?

LORD MELCOURT. My partiality may perhaps cast a little suffusion over my judgment. But tell me, do you not venerate his memory? Do you not admire his works?

MR. FANCY. Perhaps as much as your Lordship; 'tis impossible with so refined an understanding as your's to receive any entertainment from his writings; the characters in his plays, for example, may be compared to the incongruities that we meet with on sign-posts: things that never existed in nature, such as blue boars, black swans, dragons, and mermaids—I never felt a more pleasing invitation to a slumber, than I did at his last comedy, which unfortunately I did

not enjoy long, for I was roused by a thousand cat-calls.

(Mr. Phrensy *starts up from the couch.*)

MR. PHRENSY. 'Tis false, 'tis false, no cat-call was heard at my comedy; though I am dead, I am not damned—

MR. FANCY. (*Recovering from his fright*) I perceive it was a trick.

MR. PHRENSY. Trick or no trick, my works will live when the memory of Lady Fidget, her monkey and yourself, will be swept from the face of the earth---base calumniator.

LORD MELCOURT. I beg I may be the negotiator of peace between the living and the dead; in the first place I can assure Mr. Fancy no indignity was meant to him---Mr. Phrensy, for particular reasons, having given out that he was dead, I thought a portrait of the author, by a celebrated painter, would add lustre to the posthumous edition of his works.

MR. FANCY. Then I forgive him.

(*Runs to embrace him.*)

MR. PHRENSY. But, tell me first, how can I forgive the scurrilous observations you so liberally bestowed upon my compositions?

LORD MELCOURT. Dear Phrensy, you do not

imagine that the painter was in earnest---flatter him a little. *(Aside to Fancy).*

MR. FANCY. I hope I am not so destitute of taste. So far from sleeping at your comedy, I disturbed the boxes with my peals of laughter.

MR. PHRENSY. Give me your hand.

MR. FANCY. Then the parts were so chequered with sentimental and pathetic passages.

MR. PHRENSY. Excuse me, there was nothing pathetic in my comedy, nor any thing like sentiment.

MR. FANCY. I only mean in the winding up of your comedy, where the butcher's daughter kneels.

MR. PHRENSY. My dear Sir, you are speaking of my tragedy.

LORD MELCOURT. Phrensy, you must excuse him---Fancy's mind has not yet recovered from the confusion your sudden bursting from the dead occasioned! You had better retire and relapse into Tombstone.

MR. PHRENSY. I will follow your direction---and as you, Mr. Fancy, are acquainted with my secret history---let us for the future be friends.

(Exit Mr. Phrensy.)

MR. FANCY. Now we are alone---I must declare you was rather too hard upon me, in ex-

posing me, as you did, to the indignation of the enraged poet---

LORD MELCOURT. I only intended a little innocent sport, I did not think he would have rushed upon us so rudely; it was his irritability in hearing himself abused, that made him rise from the dead.

MR. FANCY. Then it was my own doing, for the abuse was all mine. I must now prepare to draw the living; the ladies, I believe, are now waiting for me.

LORD MELCOURT. I will follow you---

(Exit Mr. Fancy.)

Enter Mr. Fashion.

LORD MELCOURT. I wish, Fashion, you had been here some time ago---we had an excellent scene between the painter and the dead poet---the painter was almost in an hysteric.

MR. FASHION. I think these two characters will afford us still more entertainment.

LORD MELCOURT. I hope so---for I want something to draw off my attention, and to prevent me from fixing too steady an eye upon this bride of mine; I shall be ashamed to introduce her among my acquaintance next winter.

MR. FASHION. Do not be under any apprehension; the instructions of Lady Bellair, Mrs. Town-

life, and Lady Angelica Worthless, will refine the rude simplicity of your wild mountain girl.

LORD MELCOURT. Though I have a high opinion of those able modern professors, I am inclined to think this Welch girl will baffle all their skill; she will never through them, as through filtering stones, divest herself of the heterogeneous matter, the heavy particles, the nauseous lees she has imbibed from her country education, from the manners of Sir Pepper, and from the vulgarity of the mother-in-law---no, no, 'tis impossible---

MR. FASHION. I ask your pardon---when she has been decanted off into polished society, she will leave the dregs behind.

LORD MELCOURT. I wish it may be so---I must now look for the painter, who is going to draw the portrait of my bride elect.

MR. FASHION. I will not detain you.

(Exeunt.)

SCENE---*The Saloon.*---Lady Plinlimmon, Miss Plinlimmon.

LADY PLINLIMMON. I beg you will put on your best looks, and sit patiently to the painter, that Lord Melcourt may have a good resemblance of you.

MISS PLINLIMMON. What does he want my

picture for? will he not see me morning, noon, and night? 'tis not likely he should forget my face: or is it to hang me in effigy, in case I should run away from him?

LADY PLINLIMMON. It is usual for the bride to present her portrait to the bridegroom, so I beg you will make no difficulty about it.

Enter Lord Melcourt and Mr. Fancy.

MR. FANCY. I hope I do not intrude upon your Ladyship?

LADY PLINLIMMON. By no means.

MR. FANCY. This is the hour your Ladyship appointed, and I confess I am impatient to commence the flattering task; but to do justice to the charms of that young lady, no pencil can have the presumption.

MISS PLINLIMMON. The painter, I find, mamma, says finer things than the lover.

LORD MELCOURT. It is part of his profession to talk the language of bombast, and inordinate adulation: It becomes my situation to shew respect, a delicate reserve, a genuine but not an importunate attachment, a calm, not a tempestuous solicitude; in one word, a silent adoration.

MISS PLINLIMMON. Silent enough! egad I believe your adoration has a lock jaw.

LADY PLINLIMMON. Fie child! don't talk so ridiculously; pray Mr. Fancy in what costume shall my daughter be drawn?

MR. FANCY. Perhaps Miss Plinlimmon will point out herself what character she prefers.

MISS PLINLIMMON. I hope Mr. Fancy will give my face a good character, for it has done no harm.

MR. FANCY. I ask your pardon, it has done a great deal of harm; but if my opinion was consulted, I should recommend to Miss Plinlimmon to be painted in the attitude of reading.

MISS PLINLIMMON. I should like to be drawn reading, for I know I have a pretty down-cast look.

LADY PLINLIMMON. I must not forget to inform you, that all the females of the Plinlimmon's have had a family mole a little above the left eye, for these two centuries. Now Isabella's is too complicated with the eye-brow; perchance you can make some slight alteration.

MR. FANCY. By the omnipotence of the pencil we can raise the beauty spot, and place it in view.

LORD MELCOURT. But is not that departing from reality? is it not a deceit? a kind of pencil lie?

MR. FANCY. It is only changing the local resemblance, it is at the worst a skilful and elegant inaccuracy; the beauty spot is there, I make no addition to what nature has already done, I only bring to the eye of admiration, what her Ladyship informs me nature has rather removed from the sight.

LADY PLINLIMMON. I declare, Mr. Fancy, you defend yourself most ingeniously; does he not, my Lord?

LORD MELCOURT. Most skilfully indeed!

MR. FANCY. I have taken a much greater licence than this, without feeling any reproach of conscience; for example, when I had the honour of drawing Lady Frizlerump, I broke the immeasurable length of her bald buff forehead, by introducing two moles and a patch; the patch you know is a thing *ad libitum*, and as I knew Lady Frizlerump had a mole on each shoulder, I removed them from their native spot, (they were well worth the carriage) and I placed them in a more conspicuous situation; there is no great deceit in this, it is only a kind of transplanting, which ought to be as allowable in painting as in gardening.

LORD MELCOURT. Well ladies, you perceive how sportfully Mr. Fancy discourses, he has a

mind to give you a specimen of his manner of entertaining his company, when they are sitting to him.

LADY PLINLIMMON. But I think before we come to any determination about the dress, it would be proper to consult the attic taste of Lady Bellair.

MR. FANCY. Most assuredly, you may shew her these miniatures which I have lately finished. This is the portrait of Miss Harelip, (*gives the miniatures*) which attracted the public eye the last exhibition. This is only a profile of Miss Woolsack, the Judge's daughter.

LADY PLINLIMMON. I will not detain you any longer at present.

MR. FANCY. I will wait upon your Ladyship, whenever you will favour me with your commands. (*Exit Mr. Fancy.*)

MISS PLINLIMMON. But why does your Lordship wish so much to have my picture, since I am to live with you? do you want me duplicated? don't you think one Miss Plinlimmon will be enough for you?

LORD MELCOURT. The mutual exchange of pictures, is one of the etiquettes of modern marriages.

LADY PLINLIMMON. Marriage itself may be

said to be a mutual exchange of attention, indulgence, and affection.

MISS PLINLIMMON. In this mutual exchange, pray, my Lord, inform me, which of us two will be the gainer?

LORD MELCOURT. If there is any calculation to be made, I am undoubtedly the gainer.

MISS PLINLIMMON. Give me leave to calculate my losses; in marrying your Lordship I lose my name—I lose the society of papa and mamma—I shall, perhaps, lose my shape—and, perhaps, in time, lose my reputation.

LADY PLINLIMMON. Peace to that flippant tongue of your's, you are trying his Lordship's patience before the time. As I must carry these miniatures to Lady Bellair, your Lordship will excuse my leaving you—Isabella, go to your papa.

(Exit Lady Plinlimmon and Miss Plinlimmon)

LORD MELCOURT. Heaven and earth! What a family am I going to be connected with! But I must not pause upon that thought, it would almost lead me to distraction.

(Exit Lord Melcourt.)

SCENE.—Lady Bellair's Apartment.

Lady Bellair—Lady Plinlimmon.

LADY BELLAIR. Here is a miniature of myself,

which was drawn when I was married; I think the dress would suit Miss Plinlimmon.

LADY PLINLIMMON. (*Taking the miniature*). 'Tis beautiful, nor could it be otherwise, while it presumed to have any resemblance of your Ladyship—but you just now mentioned your marriage; I know that you and Lord Bellair were separated not long after; interested as I am in whatever relates to your Ladyship, do not imagine it is mere curiosity that solicits some illustration upon that point.

LADY BELLAIR. I am ready to give you every information, and more so, as ill-nature, that monotonous and dull commentator, may have construed our separation in her invariable manner.

LADY PLINLIMMON. I am all attention.

LADY BELLAIR. Lord Bellair, somewhat advanced in years, palled and satisfied with the pleasures of the town, began to meditate a retreat; but before he retired into the country, from which he was never to return, he ranged through all the gay scenes of public resort, to find a youthful associate, to accompany him in his retirement.

LADY PLINLIMMON. Your mysterious history begins to unfold itself; the beauteous flower that

flourished in the bright sunshine of admiration, grew pale and cheerless when it was transplanted to the solitary gloom of the country.

LADY BELLAIR. I must confess your Ladyship's extemporary apologue comprises my little story, and makes my continuation unnecessary.

LADY PLINLIMMON. Not at all—I beg you will continue your interesting narrative.

LADY BELLAIR. Lord Bellair, amidst the innumerable beauties that at once attracted and bewildered his choice, threw at length his selecting glance upon me.

LADY PLINLIMMON. His choice did honour to his taste.

LADY BELLAIR. It did not, however, contribute to his happiness—the single voice of my reluctance was lost in the chorus of approbation that resounded from all my relations and friends—I then summoned all the fortitude I was capable of, and took a courageous leave of the town—adieu, I cried, to the flattery of men—to the pleasing envy of the women—adieu to balls—adieu to the delight of charioteering in a phaeton through St. James's-street every morning—adieu to the easy instructions of the town, to the contemplation of manners in caricature sheps, to the reading of Shakspeare upon canvass, and to the study of the

English history upon walls---the fatal hour arrived---the carriage was at the door---

LADY PLINLIMMON. You really excite my compassion! What ensued when you reached the ancient family seat?

LADY BELLAIR. Say rather the family vault! I wrapt myself up in my resignation, as in a winding-sheet, and thought to have buried myself in a husband---the fates decreed otherwise: I broke forth from the ponderous marble, beneath which I was quietly inurned, and am come again to reside among the living.

LADY PLINLIMMON. The world is a considerable gainer by enjoying you once more. Fortunate was the storm that blew such a flower upon the lap of society. But whence arose that storm? Did it arise from Lord Bellair's ill-temper? however, I am not curious; indeed I can partly guess; the solitude of the country, faintly chequered by the visits of the apothecary, and the vicar's wife; his Lordship's fulsome fondness---his odious approaches---

LADY BELLAIR. My dear Lady Plinlimmon, you are going on so rapidly! It is of no use to reckon the slight imperceptible threads of discontent, which grow at length into a cable. Be-

hold me restored to independence, sufficiently affluent; and almost as happy as a widow.

LADY PLINLIMMON. May nothing interrupt the happiness you possess, and which you deserve! Before I had the honour of your acquaintance, I heard your merits highly extolled.

LADY BELLAIR. I am exceedingly obliged to those persons who have smoothed my path to your Ladyship's partiality. But to whom am I indebted?

LADY PLINLIMMON. The persons I allude to are friends of your Ladyship, and are neighbours of our's in Wales; they were in town last winter: I mean Mrs. Vandal and her sister.

LADY BELLAIR. Yes! I recollect those old tapestry figures. But you must not imagine there was any intimacy between us! I endured them at my toilet. They may be reckoned, if you please, among my morning friends, but you may be sure I never acknowledged the creatures in an evening.

LADY PLINLIMMON. That is charming! I shall acquire under your auspices the fashionable discriminations. The morning and evening friend is a happy distinction. But I fear I am trespassing upon your time. (*Offering to go*).

LADY BELLAIR. I will wait upon you immediately. With your permission, I will send to the company to assemble in your book-room, where we will fix upon the plan of this evening's amusement. (*Exit Lady Plinlimmon.*)

SCENE.—*Book-Room.*

Enter Lord Melcourt—Mr. Phrensy.

LORD MELCOURT. We will wait till Lady Plinlimmon comes, as she wishes extremely to commence a literary acquaintance with you.

MR. PHRENSY. She is comely, faith! I do not dislike her person.

LORD MELCOURT. She is in the Ruben's style.

MR. PHRENSY. I hear her coming.

Enter Lady Plinlimmon.

LADY PLINLIMMON. I hope, gentlemen, you have not been here long. I feel myself peculiarly distinguished in the desire I understand you expressed of forming an acquaintance with me. A man of your talents is not to be met with in every house. (*Mr. Phrensy bows very low.*)

LORD MELCOURT. That bow says more than a pompous train of words.

LADY PLINLIMMON. I am not insensible to its eloquence; it flatters me as much as a dedica-

tion. Pray, Sir, are you engaged in any work at present?

MR. PHRENSY. I am only superintending a new edition of the works of a dear friend, whom I have lately lost----the immortal Classical Phrensy!

LORD MELCOURT. While Mr. Tombstone is expatiating on the merits of his departed friend, I will call upon Sir Pepper, and return in a few minutes.

LADY PLINLIMMON. Pray do! and bring Sir Pepper, and Isabella, along with you; the company is to rendezvous here. (*Exit Lord Melcourt.*) Indeed, Sir, it is very amiable in you to suppress the effusions of your own powers, to attend to the interest of another.

MR. PHRENSY. It is not so much attending to the interest of my friend, as it is consulting the interest of the nation, while I am preparing this noble edition of his works for the general delight.

LADY PLINLIMMON. But I have been so unfortunate as never to hear of Phrensy's name.

MR. PHRENSY. What! never heard of Classical Phrensy, Esq.

LADY PLINLIMMON. No! I protest I never heard his name till you pronounced it.

MR. PHRENSY. Let me tell you, Lady Plinlimmon, if the rays of his genius have not pierced the dense atmosphere of Wales that envelopes your mountains---

LADY PLINLIMMON. Mr. Tombstone, you alarm me! I had no idea of degrading your friend. I will promote the subscription among all my acquaintance, and do every thing in my power to atone for my seeming disrespect.

MR. PHRENSY. I am calm again: but you will excuse a little warmth in favour of a person who is as dear to me as myself. We were inseparable; we never differed upon the smallest point; if one spoke, the other listened; if one slept, the other nodded.

LADY PLINLIMMON. Ah! such a friendship is seldom to be found. I can assure you, Sir, the warmth that just now broke from you has only served to exalt me in your esteem; and as a proof of what I am saying, I beg I may lay the corner stone of our acquaintance with this little brilliant. (*Gives him a ring.*)

MR. PHRENSY. This generosity subdues me.

LADY PLINLIMMON. Let the ring be as a passport to this apartment at all times. And when you are at leisure, I should wish to take some

lessons of botany under your direction. Lord Melcourt informs me, that every science is within the range of your mind.

MR. PHRENSY. I shall be happy in obeying your commands.

LADY PLINLIMMON. You think, Sir, that botany is a proper occupation for a female mind?

MR. PHRENSY. Nothing so proper. Give me leave to cite a couplet, composed by my lamented friend, applicable to this subject. It is a happy couplet; he sent it to Lady Nightshade, who is well versed in the loves of the plants; it runs thus:

" Delightful emblem of her softer power,

" A woman's proper study is a flower."

LADY PLINLIMMON. Exquisite couplet! What a great man your friend was!

MR. PHRENSY. The confidence you place in me; this little twinkling monitor of your kindness; your affability; every thing prompts, inclines, urges, commands, compels me to undeceive you.

LADY PLINLIMMON. To undeceive me? What can you mean, Mr. Tombstone?

MR. PHRENSY. I am not Mr. Tombstone; it

is an assumed name; a veil to cover me for certain purposes.

LADY PLINLIMMON. What purposes? Who are you?

MR. PHRENSY. Bursting from my concealment, like Æneas from his cloud, know that I am Classical Phrensy! 'Tis Phrensy speaks! 'tis Phrensy kneels! 'tis Phrensy's lips now touch this hand!

LADY PLINLIMMON. I did really imagine you was some great personage in disguise. But explain the mystery of all this.

MR. PHRENSY. Envy, and her train, have of late carried on so atrocious a war against me, that I have been persuaded to sham a retreat, and give out that I am dead.

LADY PLINLIMMON. Excellent idea!

MR. PHRENSY. In the mean time, I am collecting subscriptions, and shall return triumphantly to life, under the cover of a superb edition of all my works.

LADY PLINLIMMON. I comprehend you perfectly, and am delighted with the confidence you repose in me.

MR. PHRENSY. The family, Mr. Fashion, and the painter, who is my particular friend, are the

only persons in the world who are intrusted with this literary secret.

LADY PLINLIMMON. I shall be as silent as Helicon.

MR. PHRENSY. The Heliconian stream is apt to babble; it would be more accurate to say, as silent as Lethe.

Enter Sir Pepper, Miss Plinlimmon, Lord Melcourt, and Mr. Fashion.

LADY PLINLIMMON. This is the gentleman, Sir Pepper, whom Lord Melcourt speaks so highly of.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. I am Mr. Tombstone's most obedient. My wife is fond of literature; you will find her versed in some of the best authors. She is fond of conversing with the dead; or, to speak more properly, with the living dead.

MR. PHRENSY. Her Ladyship was conversing with the living dead when you entered.

LADY PLINLIMMON. And, I must add, a favourite author.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. Is your Lordship determined to set out for Ireland as soon as the ceremony is over?

LORD MELCOURT. The reason that compels me

to leave you so soon is the business I have there, which demands immediate dispatch.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. I am surprized Mr. Conscience, the lawyer, is not yet come with the writings.

LORD MELCOURT. He will certainly be here to-day.

MISS PLINLIMMON. What matters, whether or no the lawyer comes? I wish poor Taffey, we left on the road, was arrived, for it is the parson who speaks the prologue to Love's play.

MR. FASHION. Aptly observed! but the nuptial play, Miss Plinlimmon, is sometimes a tragic-comedy! the dialogue frequently uncouth, vehement, and boisterous. What do you think your's will be?

MISS PLINLIMMON. Oh! our's will be a gay farce.

Enter Lady Bellair.

LADY BELLAIR. Now we are all assembled, let the master of the ceremonies instruct us what we are to do.

LORD MELCOURT. The carriages are at the door; suppose we take an airing through the park, and lounge at the different buildings.

LADY BELLAIR. Let me be mistress of the revels for this evening. We will imagine the

phaetons are triumphal cars, and they shall convey us to the temple of Mars, where Mr. Tombstone shall read to the company his new translation of the Battle of the Frogs.

LADY PLINLIMMON. Excellent! I love analogy.

LADY BELLAIR. And as your Ladyship is fond of analogy, we will take some whipt syllabub in the pavillion of friendship, and regale ourselves with ice-creams in the temple of Hy-men.

MR. FASHION. A little severe, I think.

LORD MELCOURT. "Where more is meant than meets the ear," (*Offering his hand to Miss Plinlimmon.*) (*Exeunt.*)

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT THE THIRD.

.....

SCENE--*The Temple of Hymen. The Company eating Ice-Creams.*

Sir Pepper Plinlimmon, Miss Plinlimmon, Lord Melcourt, Mr. Fashion, and Lady Bellair.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON.

I THINK, my Lord, this Temple of Hymen, the most beautiful building in your park.

MR. FASHION. This ice is excellent!

MISS PLINLIMMON. Cold food for the Temple of Hymen.

MR. FASHION. 'Tis not the only food!

LORD MELCOURT. I beg, Lady Bellair, you will check your cicisbeo, Mr. Fashion, and not let him libertinise with my Diana.

LADY BELLAIR. What pretence can I have to restrain him? Fashion is like the air; a chartered libertine, free to play with every flower.

MISS PLINLIMMON. Egad he shan't play with me tho'!

LADY BELLAIR. Tell me, my dear, why did your mamma leave us so abruptly?

MISS PLINLIMMON. Mamma, I fancy, has had enough of the Temple of Hymen.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. Your Ladyship perceives this spoiled child has the liberty of saying what she pleases. My wife is gone with her ingenious friend, to study botany.

LADY BELLAIR. I should be sorry to constrain her Ladyship.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. Be so good as to inform me, who fancied these decorations? Are they indebted to the hand of any foreign artist?

LORD MELCOURT. There is no occasion to apply to foreign auxiliaries, for the purpose of elegant art---the native growth of our soil, amply supplies the demands of taste in every department.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. This relieve is happily executed! come here, Isabella, you understand mythology. Here is Hymen, attended by a group of cupids: do you conceive the allegoric meaning of the artist?

MISS PLINLIMMON. Perfectly! Here is Hymen, with a torch in his hand, that is, I suppose, to light the bride and bridegroom home.

And the dear little cupids, I suppose, foretell the children.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. Ridiculous! Your pervert every thing by your distorted applications! But explain the remainder—you see: Night personated following Hymen, she throws o'er her frame a mantle studded with stars, and among the stars appears a crescent.

MISS PLINLIMMON. The mantle studded with stars designates the holy stillness and unruffled union of the marriage state.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. Very well indeed.

MISS PLINLIMMON. And the crescent denotes the honey-moon.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. There you relapse into your absurdity.

MR. FASHION. Miss Plinlimmon will perhaps do me the honour to explain this compartment—here is Hymen, binding a shepherd and a shepherdess with a chain of flowers.

MISS PLINLIMMON. It is your turn now, you shall explain this—

MR. FASHION. Upon my word, I think this a most excellent allegory, and illustrates well the short triumph of matrimony—the chain of roses is easily broken, and the roses soon fade.

LORD MELCOURT. Fashion speaks the language of an inveterate batchelor, yet every thing in nature condemns his sarcasm: the birds, that make this grove re-echo with their harmony, what are all their songs, but so many hymns in honour of the married state.

MR. FASHION. I ask your pardon, Lord Melcourt. The economy of your grove, will not assist your argument in defence of Hymen, for every feathered couple who were so happy the last spring are now divorced, and all the harmony and love, which now reign in your woods, is the result of separation and of new engagements.

LORD MELCOURT. Truce to your licentious insinuations; to purify the temple that has been so profaned, I entreat Miss Plinlimmon to favour us with the song in honour of Hymen, with which she enchanted the company last night.

MISS PLINLIMMON. I am ready to comply with your request.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. With your Ladyship's permission, I will go and look for the botanists.

LADY BELLAIR. He is positively jealous (*aside*).—Indeed, Sir Pepper, you must not go till you have heard the song.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. I am all obedience.

The Song by Miss Plinlimmon.

I.

Oh young affection's glowing train
By mutual fond endearment won!
At Hymen's altar claim the chain
That twines two willing hearts in one!

II.

Have ye not seen in Flora's bower,
Two roses on one stem respire?
So form'd by passion's blending power,
Two hearts are thron'd on one desire.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. I presume I have now your Ladyship's leave to wait upon the botanists.

MR. FASHION. Sir Pepper, you will only interrupt the scholar, in the study of nature--the eminent professor under whom Lady Plinlimmon is now acquiring a new science, would wish not to be deranged.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. Very likely--nevertheless, I shall make them a visit.

LADY BELLAIR. We will accompany you to the house.

(Exeunt omnes.)

SCENE—*Book-Room.*

Lady Plinlimmon and Mr. Phrensy, at a table covered with plants and flowers.

LADY PLINLIMMON. What a wonderful system have you brought me acquainted with? I never could have conceived there were such astonishing things in nature, as male and female flowers—

MR. PHRENSY. I have, most assuredly, let your Ladyship a little into Flora's secrets:

LADY PLINLIMMON. Male and female flowers! I am petrified! But tell me, learned professor, when the flowers are at a distance from one another, how they communicate their mutual passion?

MR. PHRENSY. There nature interposes her happiest stratagem! She calls her western gales, her amorous zephyrs, and they on their fragrant wings convey the lovers to each other.

LADY PLINLIMMON. Now, Sir, as you have led me, as it were, behind the curtain, into Flora's green-room, I confess, I am not much edified at the morals of the plants. Indeed the flowers appear to be an abandoned profligate race—here is a honey suckle, which you say contains five males, and only one female—this

modest snow-drop, you tell me, has six husbands---

MR. PHRENSY. Indeed, nature has been rather partial to your sex in her economy of plants.

LADY PLINLIMMON. Poor things! what a pity it is they are not endowed with sensibility!

MR. PHRENSY. I have observed, since the ladies of fashion have applied to the study of botany, they are not only ambitious of rivaling the flowers in beauty, but they have also endeavoured in some degree to rival them in their other prerogatives.

LADY PLINLIMMON. Take care, Mr. Phrensy; you are growing censorious. (*Enter Sir Pepper Plinlimmon*). You cannot imagine, Sir Pepper, how delighted I am with the beautiful and sublime science of botany!

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. Indeed!

LADY PLINLIMMON. This learned gentleman has raised, as it were, the veil of nature, and has revealed to me some of her secrets; and I must own, secrets that excite my astonishment. According to the illustrations of this learned professor, the chalice of every flower is a kind of a house of bad fame.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. (*ironically*) Then a lady of your unspotted virtue ought to shrink, aa

the sensitive plant, from a study that presents to you nothing but scenes of immorality.

LADY PLINLIMMON. There can be no harm in gratifying a literary curiosity. But I assure you, Sir Pepper, I shall be apt to think it is not extremely decent to wear a nosegay!

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. If you would read the delightful poem of the Loves of the Plants, you need not give this gentleman any further trouble. At present I must take the liberty of desiring him to leave us alone, as I have something to communicate to you in private.

MR. PHRENSY. I obey your commands. In our next lecture we will expatiate on the dews that refresh the flowers at night.

(Exit Mr. Phrensy.)

LADY PLINLIMMON. Well, Sir Pepper, what have you to communicate? Nothing, I presume, very entertaining?

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. You now receive a positive order, not to admit that literary fop any more into your study.

LADY PLINLIMMON. What, Sir Pepper! When the ray of knowledge begins to dawn, must it expire at your uncreating word?

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. Your Ladyship's metaphorical expressions have no effect upon me;

And give me leave to observe, that I have always found you refractory and uncomplying with my requests.

LADY PLINLIMMON. How can you be so unjust? Where is the wife throughout Wales that is more complacent? Did I ever refuse to comply with a request of your's, from January to January? Indeed, Sir Pepper, I might complain of the very few indulgences you ever granted me.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. Dare you complain of my want of indulgence, when there is not a whim, that I have not always been ready to indulge you in! When the gardening coxcomb from England came to us last year, did not I submit to have the front of my old forest metamorphosed into clumps like large pies? Did he not fling a confining belt, as he called it, round my place! as if he thought the hills, vales, and woods were going to run away! Did not I let him, to please you, zigzag the avenue in such a manner, that I could hardly find my way to my own house?

LADY PLINLIMMON. You must allow that Plinlimmon Castle wanted a touch of the modern hand.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. Then there was the

fencible Colonel,—but I have done. Let me *only* entreat you not to complain any more of my not granting you any indulgences! Zounds, Madam, the Pope at Rome could not have granted you more indulgences than I have. But no more, I have only to beg of you to stay here till I return with some papers for you to sign, and which Lord Melcourt and Mr. Fashion are to witness. (*Exit Sir Pepper Plinlimmon.*)

LADY PLINLIMMON. Never was a person of delicate feelings so thrown away as I was when I consented to be the wife of Sir Pepper.

Enter Mr. Phrensy.

MR. PHRENSY. I watched Sir Pepper out, I heard him go along the gallery muttering, as if he was much displeased, I am afraid he has been endeavouring to ruffle your angelic temper.

LADY PLINLIMMON. He has absolutely imposed his commands upon me not to receive your visits.

MR. PHRENSY. I rejoice to hear it.

LADY PLINLIMMON. What do you mean, Mr. Phrensy?

MR. PHRENSY. Prohibition, like a glass of bitters, stimulates the appetite and awakens our partialities: I dare say, I now appear more amiable to your Ladyship than I did before.

LADY PLINLIMMON. I confess, at least, your presumption does not offend me; but I am sorry to inform you, that you must not stay with me at present; Sir Pepper is returning immediately, and Lord Melcourt and Mr. Fashion are coming with him.

MR. PHRENSY. They cannot be here so soon—Mr. Fashion was just now in earnest conversation with Lady Bellair, in the long cathedral harbour, and Lord Melcourt was—

LADY PLINLIMMON. You are mistaken—for I hear them coming! What can be done! It is too late to escape—you must not take refuge in the bed-chamber, my blabbing maid is there—conceal yourself behind this curtain.

(Lets down the curtain that hangs over the book-shelves.)

MR. PHRENSY. *(Peeping from behind the curtain.)* I cannot, at least, want entertainment where there are so many books.

LADY PLINLIMMON. How can you be jocular now? You see the agitation I am in—

Enter Sir Pepper Plinlimmon, Lord Melcourt, and Mr. Fashion.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. These gentlemen

will have the goodness to be witnesses to your signing this paper.

LORD MELCOURT. How does your Ladyship proceed in the study of botany?

LADY PLINLIMMON. At the desire of Sir Pepper, I have laid aside the thoughts of botany, for the present.

LORD MELCOURT. It is a pity your Ladyship should not avail yourself of the advantage of being under the same roof with so eminent a professor.

MR. FASHION. A person of your Ladyship's abilities would have made a rapid progress under so skilful a director; he has a way of bringing his scholars forward in a very short time.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. He has the way of bringing himself forward in a very short time. Be so good as to sign your name. (*Offering the paper*). You keep these gentlemen waiting.

MR. FASHION. I am sure we have nothing better to do than converse with the learned lady.

LADY PLINLIMMON. You are very obliging; but I will not any longer intrude on your time.

(*She writes her name—Then Lord Melcourt and Mr. Fashion sign.*)

MR. FASHION. Pray, Lord Melcourt, have you a Virgil on those shelves behind the curtain? Tombstone and I had a dispute about a passage in the fourth book.

LORD MELCOURT. No! That is a mere lady's library, nothing but moderns—I ran up a few shelves, and furnished them with some every-day volumes for the convenience of any lady who might occupy these apartments.

LADY PLINLIMMON. Mr. Fashion, there may be a Virgil behind the curtain; but not the Virgil you mean.

MR. FASHION. You allude to the translation; no, that will not do; I want to consult the original.

LADY PLINLIMMON. Then you must have recourse to the library below.

LORD MELCOURT. But why does your Ladyship drop that curtain over the books?

LADY PLINLIMMON. I found it hanging, and I make it a rule to leave things exactly as I find them.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. The curtain, my dear, I think was up just now, when I was with you.

LADY PLINLIMMON. Was it, my dear? I do not recollect—very true, it was; the sun played

so powerfully upon the books, I was afraid it would tarnish the beautiful bindings, so I dropt the curtain.

MR. FASHION. I love beautiful bindings and typographical luxury. Pray let me be favoured with the sight of the books.

LADY PLINLIMMON. Not worth your inspection—a mere female library, and authors for women.

LORD MELCOURT. Allow me to indulge Fashion's curiosity. As for the sun's spoiling the books, it matters not, when the bindings are the worse for wear, the books may have new bindings; a well-bound book is not like a lady's reputation, which once soiled, can never—
(*Draws up the curtain—discovers Mr. Phrensy*). There was, indeed, a Virgil behind the curtain!

MR. FASHION. An author for a lady!

LORD MELCOURT. But not so well bound as Fashion expected.

MR. PHRENSY. Gentlemen, you may laugh if you please, but we, enterprising fellows, are now and then exposed to these untoward discoveries. They are inevitable incidents in the comedy of life. This is an incident—

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. Arrogant pedant!

If this was not Lord Melcourt's house, my cane would chastise your insolence.

LADY PLINLIMMON. I assure you, my dear, this gentleman had received my commands not to enter these apartments any more ; at that instant I heard you returning.

MR. PHRENSY. And to save you from an object so disagreeable as myself, I secreted myself behind that curtain.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. Daring wretch ! what is it you mean ? Do you presume to make the personal attractions of that lady the object of your bold pretensions ?

LADY PLINLIMMON. Well, Sir Pepper, since we are among friends, I give you my word, that if ever I could be persuaded to deviate from the path of decorum, and make a little *faux pas*, it should not be with a literary person.

MR. FASHION. Your Ladyship is perfectly right. The literary heroes are not renowned in the annals of gallantry ; a book-worm is a poor harmless creature.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. What you say, Mr. Fashion, is sensible and judicious. I have heard it observed, that a lieutenant of the guards is more formidable to a married man, than the whole body of the Antiquarian Society. Mr.

Tombstone will excuse the warmth I was just now surprised into.

MR. PHRENSY. Pray do not mention it. Your prohibition with regard to my coming to this apartment shall be strictly obeyed, and I shall for the future look for the honour of your Ladyship's society only in the drawing-room, which you know is a neutral apartment, and accessible to every part of the family.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. Gentlemen, your obedient, I must return with these papers.

(Exit.)

LORD MELCOURT. Well, this scene has ended much better than I expected. The storm would have fallen heavy upon Tombstone, had it not been for your Ladyship's happy sarcasm upon the gallantry of the learned. But I must beg leave to absent myself; I hope your Ladyship will excuse me.

LADY PLINLIMMON. But why will your Lordship deprive us of your company?

LORD MELCOURT. Consider, Madam, I am at the eve of being married—my mind is so full—I have so many things to think of.

MR. PHRENSY. What can your Lordship have to think of? Every thing flows so smoothly to

your wishes—you have no more occasion to think than a translator.

MR. FASHION. No more he has : and I could undertake to prove that his Lordship is a kind of a translator himself, and even a translator into various languages.

LORD MELCOURT. How do you make that out ?

MR. FASHION. I have seen you sometimes in liquor, and then you translate yourself into a beast.

MR. PHRENSY. Very good !

MR. FASHION. You will soon be married, and then you will translate yourself into another kind of animal.

MR. PHRENSY. You mistake, that will not be his own doing.

MR. FASHION. Very true ! some intimate friend will do that translation for him.

LORD MELCOURT. Will not your Ladyship take my part against these profane batchelors ?

LADY PLINLIMMON. The arrows these gentlemen shoot are not dipt in gall.

LORD MELCOURT. Nor are their points very keen. But I must be going.

LADY PLINLIMMON. As the party is breaking up, suppose, Mr. Phrensy, you attend me to

the neutral apartment, as you ingeniously term it.

MR. PHRENSY. I am at your command.

(*Offers his hand.—Exit with Lady Plinlimmon.*)

LORD MELCOURT. There go two, the most ridiculous personages!

MR. FASHION. And the best suited to one another.

LORD MELCOURT. I wish my future bride and I were half as well adapted to one another.

MR. FASHION. What! Melcourt, do you feel faint-hearted?

LORD MELCOURT. Faith! I do. The whimsicality of the different persons under this roof has occasioned some laughing, which has served to divert my attention from the main object. But when my thoughts rest upon my approaching nuptials, my mind shrinks from its purpose.

MR. FASHION. Oh! this is nothing but a vapour fit, a qualm before matrimony; it will pass away.

LORD MELCOURT. Never, never.

MR. FASHION. She is handsome—very rich.

LORD MELCOURT. Did she possess all the barbaric gold of the city, it would not atone for her deficiencies in other respects.

MR. FASHION. What do you call deficiencies?

The little rusticities of her home-bred education will disappear in time; she will catch the tone of the stage she is entering upon; the continual action of surrounding example in higher life will wear away her peculiarities, and she will insensibly glide into the general mass.

LORD MELCOURT. You are calm and philosophic; but I cannot be cooled and philosophised into the approval of what I am sensible is not strictly honourable; which is leading, and as it were betraying a young woman to the altar, for whom I entertain no passion; no preference, no esteem.

MR. FASHION. Your good nature will prompt you to treat her with civility; her simplicity will explain your politeness into love; and the torrent of amusements in town will prevent her prying into your private pleasure-ground.

LORD MELCOURT. Fashion, you talk it well; but I do protest, if I could be prevailed upon to marry this young woman, disliking her as I do, I should feel an internal degradation, that would poison all my days.

MR. FASHION. What can be done? it is too late to recede; the Welch family will be in an uproar.

LORD MELCOURT. I have a scheme---a lucky

thought occurred this morning. I think I have hit upon a method of escaping from the chains I have been forging for myself; and in preparing the girl for the event, I shall contrive to soften her disappointment by a kind of innocent imposition, which will make her believe that the breaking off the intended marriage is her own act.

MR. FASHION. This is at once generous and humane; to ward off the point that would wound her pardonable vanity in the expectation of being Lady Melcourt. But what is your plan?

LORD MELCOURT. That I will communicate to you in a more private place; and if my stratagem should not succeed, I must then have recourse to your superior invention.

(Exeunt.)

•
END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT THE FOURTH.

.....

MISS PLINLIMMON. (*Reading aloud.*)

—“OH! happy state, when souls each other draw.” (*Enter Lord Melcourt*) Your calling upon me when I am alone is very kind; I am now convinced your Lordship has a great regard for me.

LORD MELCOURT. May I take the liberty of asking, what book has the honour of engaging your attention?

MISS PLINLIMMON. I have been dressing my expectation with love verses. (*Reads.*)

“For thee the spouse prepares the bridal ring,

“For thee white virgins hymenials sing”---

But what makes you look so grave, when you are so near being a bridegroom? A little bird sung in my ear; that to-morrow is to be the happy day, and I suppose your Lordship is come to inform me of the happy tidings.

LORD MELCOURT. No, indeed! I did not come for that purpose; I came with another view.

MISS PLINLIMMON. I hope it will not rain to-morrow, there must not be a speck of a cloud in the skies on our wedding-day.

LORD MELCOURT. I must beg your serious attention to what I have to say to you. (*Takes a chair; offers her one; they sit*)---If I seem a little embarrassed, you will have the goodness to excuse me? I think it my duty to inform you, that when I was last abroad, I had the misfortune of being introduced to a young Nun, who gained my affections, and though that accomplished woman is no more---

MISS PLINLIMMON. If she is no more, I have nothing to apprehend, for with all her want of accomplishments, Isabella Plinlimmon must be superior to a dead Nun.

LORD MELCOURT. 'Tis not only that---

MISS PLINLIMMON. Your Lordship did not fall in love with the whole convent?

LORD MELCOURT. No, no, when I lost my Constantia, my warm affections flew to her tomb.

MISS PLINLIMMON. And when your warm affections have caught cold at her tomb, they will fly back again.

LORD MELCOURT. Never, never, with her they have taken up their everlasting residence.

MISS PLINLIMMON. Well, let them; you and I will make new affections.

LORD MELCOURT. (*Aside*). Nothing will do, she is determined to have me.

MISS PLINLIMMON. What does your Lordship say?

LORD MELCOURT. I am afraid, Miss Plinlimmon, there are other objectionable circumstances relative to myself; with all the appearance of affability and condescension, I can assure you, that I am most vehemently passionate.

MISS PLINLIMMON. Matrimony will cure that vice! I have heard my mamma say, that marriage is a great tamer.

LORD MELCOURT. I have also the misfortune of walking in my sleep, and I get out of the window, and walk upon the roof of the house.

MISS PLINLIMMON. As long as you do not insist upon my walking with you, I do not call that an objectionable circumstance: and when you are tired of inhaling the night breezes from the top of the house, you will find me overjoyed to receive you at your return.

LORD MELCOURT. (*Rising from his chair*). I see, Miss Plinlimmon, you make a jest of what

my delicate feelings prompt me to reveal to you.

MISS PLINLIMMON. (*Rising*) Quite the reverse; your candour endears you the more to me; and to return you an equivalent of candour and unreserve, on my part, I will unfold to your Lordship a secret, though I am unwilling to disclose it.

LORD MELCOURT. Well, what have you to communicate?

MISS PLINLIMMON. 'Tis what you would have found out, if I did not reveal it: but in this charming moment of mutual confidence, I cannot resist telling my love, that I have crooked legs.

LORD MELCOURT. If you please, Miss Plinlimmon, we will put an end to this discourse.

MISS PLINLIMMON. If you desire it. We shall have time enough to talk when we are man and wife: adieu, I am going to Lady Bellair, and will tell her all that has passed in this delightful confidential intercourse.

LORD MELCOURT. I must insist upon your not revealing one word to Lady Bellair of what I have been saying to you.

MISS PLINLIMMON. As you please; your Lordship will find me, through life, strictly observant of your commands. (*Exit Miss Plinlimmon.*

LORD MELCOURT. Were my debts and difficulties treble to what they are, I would not extricate myself on the condition of marrying that thing! That vile antithesis! Half a wit and half an ideot! (*Enter Mr. Fashion*) Oh! Fashion, you never came so opportunely, I am at a loss how to act; my scheme has entirely failed.

MR. FASHION. Then I must be your pilot, to steer you through this intricate perplexity.

LORD MELCOURT. Her ideot fondness increases with what should have excited her disgust.

MR. FASHION. Leave me to construct the means of withdrawing from you this girl's partiality. I presume I am empowered to say whatever I please.

LORD MELCOURT. You may indulge the utmost latitude; paint me in whatever colours you choose.

MR. FASHION. Well, I will endeavour to do my best for you; I have a good knack, you know, at a caricature.

LORD MELCOURT. But do not make me too ridiculous.

MR. FASHION. Remember, you just now gave me unlimited powers.

LORD MELCOURT. Very true; I resign myself to your judgment; let me appear absurd, fickle,

preposterous, any thing, to get rid of this monial engagement.

MR. FASHION. Suppose, while I am unwinding her affections and desires from you, I shall endeavour to bottom and twist them round self?

LORD MELCOURT. What! you marry her? you in earnest? Will you quit your free ropleasure-boat, for the monotonous hulk of matrimony?

MR. FASHION. Her guineas will decorate and enliven the hulk?

LORD MELCOURT. Well, if you can make a proselyte of the girl, you have my full permission, and best wishes; here is my licence, with a change of a name, will serve your purpose, and you may get married immediately, without acquainting any of the family of it.

MR. FASHION. I will go and inform I Bellair of your resolution, and of my project.

LORD MELCOURT. I should be delighted in a girl who takes a fancy to you.

MR. FASHION. We shall see. (Exit)

SCENE.---Lady Bellair's Apartment.

Lady Bellair---Miss Plinlimmon.

LADY BELLAIR. What you choose to say

private is of no consequence; but before company I must insist upon your never mentioning my husband.

MISS PLINLIMMON. Then tell me, as we are alone; I long to hear what occasioned the separation between Lord Bellair and you.

LADY BELLAIR. Restrain this idle curiosity; it does not become you

MISS PLINLIMMON. Did your husband walk in his sleep? Was he in love with a dead nun?

LADY BELLAIR. How wildly you talk!

MISS PLINLIMMON. Not so wildly neither: I know what I know; but I will not tell.

Enter Sir Pepper Plinlimmon.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. I take the liberty of calling upon your Ladyship to express my uneasiness that the lawyer from town is not yet arrived; the post is come in, and I have no information about him.

LADY BELLAIR. Delay is the characteristic of his order? When that Gray's Inn slug has crawled over, and covered with his black slime an acre of parchment, we shall see him here.

MISS PLINLIMMON. But Mr. Taffey, who is to perform the ceremony, is as necessary as the lawyer.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. As for Mr. Taffey,

I have a letter from him, he will be here this evening.

MISS PLINLIMMON. Then all is well! (*Rejoicing extravagantly—Enter Lord Melcourt*) My Lord! my Lord! Taffey will be here this evening, and to-morrow I shall be the fondest of wives!

LORD MELCOURT. Flattering as your expectancy may be to me, I wish you would restrain this inordinate exultation.

MISS PLINLIMMON. Well, papa, I will go and pack up my fine cloaths, for I suppose we shall set out for Ireland immediately after the ceremony. I rejoice to think that Taffey will be here this evening! (*Exit.*)

LORD MELCOURT. (*Aside to Lady Bellair*) Was there ever such a Hottentot!

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. You don't appear, Lord Melcourt, to be struck with the artless manner of my girl.

LORD MELCOURT. I ask your pardon, I am exceedingly struck!

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. She has a few rusticities adhering to her, all which will drop from her, like dross from gold.

LORD MELCOURT. In the crucible of Lady Bellair's refining conversation.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. Very true. I am certain Lady Bellair could perform miracles on my daughter—if she pleased.

LADY BELLAIR. But why, Sir Pepper, do you doubt my inclination?

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. Because you fine ladies dislike trouble. I will be bold to say, that in the course of the winter, you never do any thing your inclination, that is to say, your vanity, does not prompt you to do.

LADY BELLAIR. I ask your pardon, Sir Pepper.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. Indulge, for once, an old man's curiosity, and edify me by recording some instances where you act in opposition to the dictates of your inclination.

LORD MELCOURT. This is a perfect challenge.

LADY BELLAIR. Well, let me recollect. I go every other Sunday, in the early part of the evening, to an old aunt, who lives at the Antipodes of the fashionable part of the town, and there I retail to her the historic scandal of the fortnight; and then she reads to me, through her green spectacles, out of a folio, a sermon of the last century.

LORD MELCOURT. I hope, Sir Pepper, you will give Lady Bellair some credit for that.

LADY BELLAIR. Then I go once in the ter to the Ancient Music.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. That, I suppose a concert performed by the decayed music

LADY BELLAIR. Not exactly so; it is, however a very edifying concert, and composed of hoary, venerable notes, that in the days of delighted the ears of Harry the Eighth and Bullen, and is now a very suitable recreation for old batchelors, old maids, and emigrant. But to continue the narrative of my mortification: my carriage every morning makes up the long procession of coaches that besiege the circulating library in Bond-street.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. That denotes Ladyship's fondness for literature.

LADY BELLAIR. I beg your pardon, Sir, literature is my aversion; I never look at a book, but I cannot avoid calling every day at the library; it is a kind of literary theatre where the waiters are in perpetual demand for elegant sonnets for Miss Simper; with poignant sauce for Mrs. Grumble; a dash of history for Lady Sleepless; a broil'd do private anecdote, highly peppered with scandal for Lady Angelica Worthless. It would surprise you, Sir Pepper, to see the female academy

enter the porch of Hookham College, their cheeks paled by study, a little relieved by a thin stratum of morning rouge. Then you would wonder at the method the learned professors adopt of supplying the impatience of their pupils: for example---one lady receives the first volume of an author, of which she will never inquire for the second; at the same time she receives the second volume of another author, of which she has not yet an idea of the first.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. Give me leave to observe, this vague method of reading must create a kind of chaos, without consistency.

LADY BELLAIR. Consistency is a vulgar word, we do not admit into our vocabulary; and as for the chaos you disapprove of, I really think there is to be found the whole merit; for this miscellaneous, variegated, unconnected reading, forms the beautiful dove-tailed, mosaic literature of the female mind.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. I hope you will allow Lady Plinlimmon to be a brilliant exception to your general description.

LADY BELLAIR. Most undoubtedly; I have a long list of exceptions. But not to interrupt the narrative of my own memoirs---I am sometimes

obliged to mingle with the elegant mob at a
of pictures.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. A sale of pict
must be very improving. You there frequen
meet with the works of the old masters.

LADY BELLAIR. The ladies of fashion do
go to auctions for the sake of the *old masters*;
they, Lord Melcourt?

LORD MELCOURT. No, indeed! A bow fr
Lord Gauze, a smile from Lord Flimsy, o
compliment from Sir Gossamer Bagatelle, effa
the names of Rembrant, Corregio, and V
dyke!

LADY BELLAIR. However, we play with
catalogue, and we stare at the pictures. An
have heard it observed, that in the two late c
brated sales, the love of vertè made the ladies g
at some pictures, from which their gra
mamas would have turned away.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. Indeed!

LADY BELLAIR. But then, I will say for
ladies, that they stole a glance at these pictu
through the medium of their long veils, wh
you know transmit a kind of drapery to
paintings! But to proceed, I am under the
ligation, sometimes, of getting up in the mid

of the night, to be in readiness to go to a new play, and with all my precaution, I can never get there before the middle of the second act.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. That is very unlucky.

LADY BELLAIR. Not in the least; for I never listen to the play.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. But does not your talking loud in the first row, disturb the audience?

LADY BELLAIR. I never occupy the first row; I place the old ladies in the first and second row, they have nothing to do, (poor things) but to listen to the play: and then I sit snug on the last form, which we call among ourselves, Tattle-row, and then perhaps, I am seated between Sir Voluble Prattle, and Colonel Easy, and we three converse and titter *a la sourdine*, the whole evening: but I am afraid I grow dull.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. Quite the reverse, I assure you. I presume your Ladyship pays more attention to the opera; the softness of the Italian language has something enchanting to a delicate ear.

LADY BELLAIR. I know nothing of the Italian language, there is no attaining the knowledge of it, without passing through the perplexing, jamb-

ling cross-roads of a grammar; that would shake my intellects to pieces.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. Still the music may flatter the ear, though you do not comprehend the words.

LADY BELLAIR. I comprehend the music as little as I do the words.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. It is, then; the dancing, I conclude, delights you---

LADY BELLAIR. No; the dancing does not particularly interest me; indeed I cannot see the dancing in my box, for I generally sit with my back to the stage.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. As neither the music nor the dancing has any allurements, I suppose your Ladyship seldom or never goes to the opera.

LADY BELLAIR. I ask your pardon, Sir Pepper, I never omit an opera.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. What then can be the attraction? I really see nothing to entice you.

LADY BELLAIR. Is it nothing, Sir Pepper, to lean half out of one's box, with the head inclined, to give the easy feather a more graceful play? Which looks a meteor waving in the air; and which, as the poet says,

"Allures attention from the tuneful scene;

"Gives fops the flutter, and old maids the spleen."

Is it nothing, Sir Pepper, to have all the opera glasses levelled at one? To sit in my box, as on a throne, the unrivalled queen of Fopland?

LORD MELCOURT. I must confess, Lady Bellair, you have an extensive dominion; Fopland is a very populous country.

LADY BELLAIR. So it is, and what is still better, there is not an old man to be found in it.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. I am sorry I am excluded from being one of your majesty's subjects?

LADY BELLAIR. Out of regard to your gallantry, I will introduce a bill to naturalise you, Sir Pepper; but not to lose the thread of my narrative, I must inform you, that I go once in the winter to an assembly, given by the wife of my physician, where all his pale convalescents stalk about like ghosts.

LORD MELCOURT. And to conclude the description, the lemonade is intentionally made so acid, that the doctor is obliged to return all the visits of his company the next day.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. Very good indeed.

LADY BELLAIR. You perceive what a mortified life I am obliged to lead.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. If your historic pencil has drawn a true resemblance, I must confess, a fashionable lady is to me an incomprehensible being. *(Exit.*

LADY BELLAIR. Now we have got rid of the ridiculous baronet, I must assume a graver tone; you know, I can be very serious when occasion demands. The more I see of Sir Pepper's absurd daughter, the more I am sensibly affected at the thoughts of your approaching nuptials. The long train of peculiar distresses incident to our family, I wish not to see terminated by means so unworthy and ignominious.

LORD MELCOURT. I do not comprehend you.

LADY BELLAIR. By marrying a young woman you are ashamed of; our family has been long involved in various difficulties; it has been known to misfortune, but it has never been acquainted with dishonour? Imagine two large portals opening before you, through one of which you should be obliged to pass! Imagine one presenting to your view a brilliant perspective, a sun streaming from a summer sky, and illuminating an earthly paradise! The other unfolding to your vision, a lowering atmosphere hanging over a blasted heath. Picture to yourself these words.

engraved on the first portal:—*They who pass through me must cast away honour.*—Fancy on the other, you behold this inscription:—*This road leads to honourable poverty;* through which of these arches would you direct your footsteps? Oh! my dear brother, in the agitation you betray, I read your heroic answer.

LORD MELCOURT. Before you had communicated your sentiments to me upon this subject, I had made my reflection, and had resolved, but Mr. Fashion, whom I am glad to see, (*Enter Fashion*) will best unfold the plan we had formed together, I refer you to him; the confusion I am at present under, will excuse my leaving you so abruptly. (*Exit.*)

MR. FASHION. Heyday, what is the matter with Melcourt? He stalked by me, in dumb show, like a tragedy hero.

LADY BELLAIR. The agitation you perceive he is in, is the honest working of nature, it will do him no harm; my brother tells me, you have something to communicate to me.

MR. FASHION. I have, and it is of importance; I was commissioned by him, to say as he did not choose to speak himself, that he is determined to break off this match.

LADY BELLAIR. He hath partly intimated his resolution. But who undertakes to inform the girl of his resolution?

MR. FASHION. That falls to my part in the play.

LADY BELLAIR. What do you propose saying to the poor girl? How will you open your unpleasant embassy?

MR. FASHION. Not so unpleasant, because I intend to propose myself.

LADY BELLAIR. Propose yourself!

MR. FASHION. As I do not occupy so high a station in life as Lord Melcourt, I mean, by proposing myself, to be a kind of a parachute, and so break, as it were, her fall.

LADY BELLAIR. You are very kind, indeed. You may not, perhaps, be so invincible in the eyes of the young lady as you are in your own.

MR. FASHION. I rely on your friendly assistance.

LADY BELLAIR. There you are mistaken. But do not impute my declining to co-operate with you, to a fear that this may be the means of withdrawing your assiduities and attentions from me. I hope I act from a more noble impulse. I am

ready to confess that the exclusive preference and predilection you have shewn me of late, have gratified my vanity; but like the waves that beat against the heedless rock, they have not shook my constancy to the man whose name I bear.

MR. FASHION. The playful gaiety of your disposition led me astray, and I thought you was delighted to return to society, unaccompanied by Lord Bellair.

LADY BELLAIR. I own I have the appearance of airiness and levity; but my gaiety is frequently assumed, and I have recourse to dissipation more as a medicine than a feast.

MR. FASHION. As you are so kind as to speak to me in so unreserved a manner, I think it incumbent on me to declare that I have no inbred aversion to the girl. I am not so fastidious, so difficult, as Melcourt; and I will add, that was I to succeed, I would do every thing in my power to contribute to her happiness; and give me also leave to say, that I believe I am not indifferent to her.

LADY BELLAIR. With such honourable sentiments as you now assure me you entertain, you have my permission to make the trial. Mutual

propensity, believe me, is the best security for happiness. The smiling flowers she scatters from her hand can alone enliven the domestic walk! 'Tis she who displays to the bride and bridegroom that eternal spring which all lovers talk of, but which so few experience! 'Tis she who gilds and dissipates the clouds of care, and pours upon the soul the chearful sunshine of the mind.

(Exeunt.)

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT THE FIFTH.

.....

Miss Plinlimmon, *sitting at a Table, writing.*

I AM glad to find my letters are finished. I cannot conceive what Mr. Fashion has to say to me in private. These letters will make my friends very happy. (*Enter Mr. Fashion.*) You are punctual to your time; I was just thinking of you. Mr. Fashion, you are a personable man--- I wonder you are not married.

MR. FASHION. The reason I am not married is, because there is only one Miss Plinlimmon. But give me leave to tell you, that you are too late for the post.

MISS PLINLIMMON. These letters are not intended for to-day's post, nor to-morrow's post; but they are intended for the post the day after the wedding. You must know that I am bound by a solemn promise to write two letters the day after my marriage, and as we shall be on our road to Ireland on that day, and consequently shall

have no time to write, I thought it would be a good plan to write beforehand, and date the letters after the wedding, which you see I have done, and have signed myself Isabella Melcourt.

MR. FASHION. Very ingeniously contrived indeed. May I take the liberty of asking who this letter is to?

MISS PLINLIMMON. It is to Mrs. Evans, an old maiden aunt, who was always very kind to me. There are no secrets; if you please, I will read it to you.

MR. FASHION. I am sure it must be worth hearing, if it comes from your pen.

MISS PLINLIMMON. (*Reads.*)

“ Dear Aunt,

“ Yesterday the holy ceremony was
“ performed—we all wept—Mamma had an
“ hysteric—two beautiful tears stole down the
“ cheek of my amiable Lord, and when he put
“ on the ring his hand trembled”—

MR. FASHION. But Miss Plinlimmon, allow me to ask, how do you know all this will happen?

MISS PLINLIMMON. There is always weeping at a wedding, as much as at a funeral.

MR. FASHION. Well, I plead ignorance, for I never assisted at a wedding.

MISS PLINLIMMON. Then get your white hand-

kerchief ready to-morrow morning. But let me see where I left off---(*reads*)

“ ----When he put on the ring his hand trembled. After the ceremony, we sat down to a sumptuous collation. We lay at a town whose name I forget. You cannot, dear madam, have any conception of his Lordship’s kindness to me.

“ I am, dear aunt,

“ Your thrice happy niece,

“ ISABELLLA MELCOURT.”

Postscript. I should have written a longer letter, had I not a bad head-ache.”

MR. FASHION. But permit me to ask, how do you foresee you will have a bad head-ache?

MISS PLINLIMMON. I heard my mamma-in-law say that she had a terrible head-ache the day after she married, so ’tis very probable.

MR. FASHION. I perceive there is another letter; who is honoured with this mark of your remembrance?

MISS PLINLIMMON. This is to Miss Bluehose, member of the female literary society at Caernarvon.

MR. FASHION. With this lady I suppose you assume a higher style.

MISS PLINLIMMON. I endeavour in this letter to write exactly as Miss Bluehose talks—

(*Reads.*)

“ Sweet Academic Friend,

“ Aurora yesterday put on her best saffron robe, to assist at our wedding: we are on our road to Ireland; my Lord, you know, is a native of that kingdom: what a delightful country must that be, which produces such men! Last night, three minutes before twelve, I ascended the expecting couch.”

MR. FASHION. Very happy expression that!

MISS PLINLIMMON. I am glad you are pleased with it, the expecting couch is in the manner and style of our academic society; but to proceed: (*reads*) “ History informs us, my dear Miss Bluehose, of the bed of Procrustes, of the bed of Ware, of the *Lit de Justice*, and of the bed of honour; I wonder that in this ~~learned~~ catalogue, the historian omitted the bed of Hymen.”

MR. FASHION. It is an unpardonable omission, indeed.

MISS PLINLIMMON. Now we have done with the letters, be so good as to inform me why you look so serious? I begin to think you envy Lord Melcourt---well, if you do, I will tell you

for your comfort, that if I was to be a widow, and had moulted away my black feathers, that is to say, when I had shed my weeds, and got rid of my sorrow, I really think you would stand a good chance.

MR. FASHION. You flatter me extremely, but to advert to the subject, which induced me to beg this private audience, I must inform you, that nothing but the great respect I entertain for you, could compel me to mention Lord Melcourt, in terms not the most favourable.

MISS PLINLIMMON. I know what you allude to, but he has promised papa never to touch a card again.

MR. FASHION. I do not allude to his passion for gaming; I point to quite a different thing.

MISS PLINLIMMON. I know what you mean there, too; he has told me all; he clambers up the roof of the house every night.

MR. FASHION. Clambers up the roof of the house! I can't tell what he has chosen to communicate to you, but I dare say he has not given you any hint of what my regard for you prompts me to reveal: to keep you no longer in suspense, Melcourt does not love you; I can scarcely suppress my indignation, when I behold so en-

chanting, so learned, so witty a young lady as Miss Plinlimmon become—

MISS PLINLIMMON. How kind you are!

MR. FASHION. Become, I say, the dupe of that indigent Peer, who only wishes to have his debts paid by your fortune. He will look upon you with no greater sensibility than he does his old banker in the city: he will set you aside, like an useless piece of lumber.

MISS PLINLIMMON. You petrify me, Mr. Fashion! But I have a resource left, which will prevent my being reduced to an useless piece of lumber.

MR. FASHION. And what is that resource?

MISS PLINLIMMON. It is a resource which belongs to the rights of women; a curtain lecture.

MR. FASHION. Oh! that will have no effect.

MISS PLINLIMMON. I know that my mamma-in-law has frequent recourse to that expedient.

MR. FASHION. And what has been her success? Her nocturnal murmurings, and her loud matin song, what have they produced, but an airy, talkative family of bickerings and discontent?

MISS PLINLIMMON. 'Tis very true.

MR. FASHION. I have frequently been aston-

ished at Lord Melcourt's cold indifference towards you.

MISS PLINLIMMON. Indeed he has not said one kind word to me since I have been at Melcourt Hall.

MR. FASHION. Then the vehemence of his character--

MISS PLINLIMMON. He told me himself he was as cross as the devil.

MR. FASHION. Then I have wondered at the contempt with which he presumes to speak of you.

MISS PLINLIMMON. I dare say he laughs at me behind my back.

MR. FASHION. I have heard him say you are an ideot.

MISS PLINLIMMON. I an ideot! Did he dare call me an ideot? I, who am one of the female academics at Caernarvon! I an ideot, with whom Miss Bluehose corresponds! I an ideot, who have been electrified and magnetised!

MR. FASHION. Notwithstanding all these credentials of your wit, you find what he says of you.

MISS PLINLIMMON. I feel the blood of the Plinlimmons rise within me.

MR. FASHION. I should not be surprized, if.

under the idea of your being an ideot, he should confine you in some old castle in Ireland, without allowing you pen, ink, or paper, to write to your friend, Miss Bluehose; without having the pleasure of being magnetized.

MISS PLINLIMMON. I renounce him from this moment! With this breath (*blows through her fingers*) I blow away all my love! Imagine you see it floating through the air, never to return to Lord Melcourt again.

MR. FASHION. Methinks I behold the fairy chariot bearing away your affections! Oh! that I could arrest the richly freighted vehicle, and seize the invaluable prize.

MISS PLINLIMMON. Indeed! Are you in earnest?

MR. FASHION. I am, upon my honour!

MISS PLINLIMMON. Ah! but you are so wild, and you love all the women!

MR. FASHION. I am like other young men, when under no particular engagement, like a bird in the grove, I wing from bough to bough; but once married, I should be as domestic and as constant as the turtle-dove.

MISS PLINLIMMON. If it be so, I could be almost induced---

MR. FASHION. Come, come, let me seize this coy hand---shew you have a spirit to reward as well as to resent.

MISS PLINLIMMON. (*laughing*) It would be a good trick to play the Irish Peer.

MR. FASHION. The study of my life would be your happiness.

MISS PLINLIMMON. Are you a gentleman?

MR. FASHION. That you know by my name--- and in point of character, I am totally different from Lord Melcourt---I love you passionately.

MISS PLINLIMMON. That is no unpleasing intelligence.

MR. FASHION. I do not walk in my sleep.

MISS PLINLIMMON. I am very glad to hear that.

MR. FASHION. But no time is to be lost--- this license of Lord Melcourt's, with a small change, will serve our purpose.

MISS PLINLIMMON. Taffey will sew us together in a twinkle.

MR. FASHION. Let us fly to the parson.

(*Exeunt.*)

SCENE----*Another Apartment.*

Enter Sir Pepper Plinlimmon.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. Well, if what I am informed of should prove true, that my girl has

no inclination to Lord Melcourt, I shall not force her.

LADY PLINLIMMON. (*behind the scenes*) Where is Sir Pepper? Where is Sir Pepper?

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. I hear Lady Plinlimmon's voice—now she is coming to pour upon me, as from a wide mortar-piece.

Enter Lady Plinlimmon.

LADY PLINLIMMON. Do you call me a wide mortar-piece, Sir Pepper?—But let that pass—I come to demand your authority over this wayward girl of our's, who pretends to dislike Lord Melcourt, because he is not, forsooth, sentimentally in love with her.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. Without mutual affection, there is no living together.

LADY PLINLIMMON. Have we not lived these fifteen years together?

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. Yes! and how have we lived?

Enter Lady Bellair.

LADY PLINLIMMON. I have been gently expostulating with Sir Pepper, on his concurring with Isabella's whimsical objection to Lord Melcourt.

LADY BELLAIR. I confess I side with Sir Pepper.

LADY PLINLIMMON. Is it possible?

LADY BELLAIR. Though the loss is my brother's, I shall not offer a word to reconcile Sir Pepper to an engagement that does not meet with his daughter's approbation.

LADY PLINLIMMON. I am astonished to hear Lady Bellair encourage a rustic notion that is unknown to the regions of fashion.

LADY BELLAIR. Your Ladyship must allow that mutual happiness is the end proposed. 'Tis the mark which, if the bride and bridegroom in the higher sphere do not hit, it is because they take a false aim.

LADY PLINLIMMON. Morality too!

LADY BELLAIR. Am not I an instance of the folly of hurrying into an unavoidable engagement?

LADY PLINLIMMON. Not in the least. Does not the world encircle you with all its attractions? Do you not enjoy the advantages of wedlock, without the incumbrances?—your Lord's title, and a handsome allowance?

LADY BELLAIR. Your Ladyship forgets that Sir Pepper is present.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. I beg she may not be interrupted on my account.

LADY PLINLIMMON. Give me leave to ask

in what manner your Ladyship can be supposed to be a sufferer from your being separated from Lord Bellair? Do your jewels shine less bright? Is the ostrich-feather on your cap less playful? Is the lace---

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. Zounds! Lady Plinlimmon, your head is like a newspaper after a birth-day---full of nothing but gauzes, foils, and trimmings.

LADY PLINLIMMON. Well, I stand corrected. I give up the point concerning my daughter, since I find every body is against me.

Enter Lord Melcourt.

LORD MELCOURT. I am happy to find Lady Plinlimmon here; I am impatient to make this open declaration to her, that the concern I feel in not being allowed to expect the honour of her alliance, is lost in the higher consideration of Miss Plinlimmon's happiness.

LADY PLINLIMMON. Indeed, my Lord, you are too good, to give way to the absurd objections of an ignorant girl.

Enter Mr. Fashion and Miss Plinlimmon,

Mr. Phrensy and Mr. Fancy.

Mr. Fashion and Miss Plinlimmon kneel.

MISS PLINLIMMON. Dear papa, give me and my husband your blessing.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. Your husband!

LADY PLINLIMMON. Your husband!

MR. PHRENSY. 'Tis even so. I had the honour of giving her away.

LADY PLINLIMMON. What do you say to this, Lord Melcourt? (*To Mr. Fashion*) Audacious wretch, to steal my daughter.

LORD MELCOURT. I can assure your Ladyship, Fashion is one of the most ancient families in the kingdom, and has a title in abeyance.

LADY PLINLIMMON. Well, if he has a title in abeyance.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. But will Lord Melcourt vouch for his character?

LORD MELCOURT. Her Ladyship looks to the gaudy distinction of title; you, Sir, look for something more substantial. Then let me tell you, that Fashion possesses those titles which virtue's patent only can bestow---honour and integrity.

SIR PEPPER PLINLIMMON. Then I am satisfied; come Lady Plinlimmon, let us forgive our child. (*Going up to Mr. Fashion and Lady Plinlimmon.*)

MR. PHRENSY. But who is to reward me for my epithalamium? To whom shall I consign it?

LORD MELCOURT. I will tell you---consign it to the fire-grate, that is the only way to insure it a warm reception.

MR. PHRENSY. Your envy at my talents prompts you to use so pitiful a conceit.

LORD MELCOURT. Well, Phrensy, I will indulge another conceit, which will not offend you so much, and that is, I hope as long as you choose to be dead, you will live at Melcourt Hall.

MR. PHRENSY. Egad, Melcourt Hall is so delightful a sepulchre, I do not believe I shall ever wish to be alive again.

LORD MELCOURT. Do you, then, never intend to return to life?

MR. PHRENSY. Yes, I do, as soon as I have, by means of my subscription, completed my poetical loan; my return to life will be a kind of an ovation: the triumphal procession shall begin with my odes, each on his fiery Pegasus: my satires, like tomahawks, shall next appear; then my elegies shall move, like a weeping train of female captives; to these shall succeed my epigrams, a brisk troop of archers, with their pointed darts: my grand epic, like a large unwieldy elephant, shall march by itself: then my tragedies, attired as widows, shall walk on one side, while my gaily-vested comedies shall trip on the other.

MR. FANCY. And a musical band of catcalls shall walk between.

MR. PHRENSY. Base canvass-dauber! how dare you interrupt me? when the poet's eye was in a fine phrensy rolling, when the muse was kindling with conception! vile brush-holder; you do not know the mischief you have done; you have made the muse miscarry; the bright vision is lost for ever---
(*Exit Mr. Phrensy.*)

LADY BELLAIR. (*Advancing*) Now Phrensy has finished his poetical rhapsody, I beg I may present my congratulations to the bride and bridegroom. I must confess to you, Mr. Fashion, that I little thought the gay irregular comedy of your bachelor life would have terminated with so abrupt and moral a conclusion: as for you, my dear, though I am not to call you sister, you will always be the object of my tender solicitude.

MISS PLINIMMON. I am a giddy creature, but I hope I shall never forfeit your protection; I shall leave to others to pursue the varying modes and fopperies of the day; this is the Fashion (*pointing to Fashion*) that I shall adopt, and to this Fashion I shall be ever constant.

LORD MELCOURT. Bravo! Matrimony inspires you; well, as it is now my turn to speak, I beg you will both accept of my best wishes; may happiness lead you through life along her most smooth and flowery path.

MISS PLINLIMMON. Well, my Lord, since you take my tricking you in such perfect good humour, when I am mistress of my fortune, I will lend you whatever money you stand in need of.

MR. FASHION. (*Displeased*) Lord Melcourt does not want our money, I presume.

MISS PLINLIMMON. I hope to see your Lordship at our house in the country! I suppose, Mr. Fashion, you have one some where?

LORD MELCOURT. Fashion's country house, I am afraid, is little better than a castle in the air; but till he has one erected upon a more solid foundation, I entreat Mr. and Mrs. Fashion will look upon Melcourt Hall as their own.

MISS PLINLIMMON. Egad this is handsome; I have one thing more to recommend to your Lordship.

LORD MELCOURT. What are your commands?

MISS PLINLIMMON. (*Half aside*) Be sure you never mention the crooked legs.

LORD MELCOURT. Depend upon my discretion---come, let us all pass some chearful days under this roof: let reproaches and complainings cease; let good humour, social intercourse, pleasantries, and content succeed.

E P I L O G U E,

BY THE

Right Hon. the late Field Marshal CONWAY.

Spoken by Miss Farren.

*WITH gloomy bodings for his bantling play
Our Author came to me the other day,
A boon to ask, tho' half afraid to break it ;
He'd got an Epilogue, and I must speak it.—
All means he fain would try, if not too late,
Still to avert his dread impending fate.
Sad visions, too, distract his anxious brain ;
Rumours of ills, that wait the scribbling train.
'Tis said your taste for Comedy is flown ;
That darling child you once were proud to own :
That Shakspeare's fires no more your senses rouse ;
Congreve and Vanbrugh seldom fill the house :
While childish pageants stuff the crowded scene,
No mortal even guessing what they mean ;
Fierce wars they wage, and dreadful battles try,
With bloodless conflict, all one knows not why.
'Till by the friendly banners we are told,
There Macedon's, there Persia's chief behold.*

*Just as on signs th' informing words declare
This the Red Lion; that is the Black Bear.
Queens, and their maids of honour, wait in vain,
'Till their mute lovers shall their suit explain.
They'd often heard, indeed, from Greece and Rome,
That love was blind, but ne'er that he was dumb.
There too those motley, female, manly graces,
With almost all things naked, but their faces;
Those modern Picts, at whom we gaze with wonder;
While their keen fulchions cut whole ranks asunder.
Great Rusty-fusti's triumphs thus we greet;
Six holy Roman emp'rors breathless at her feet.
Nor less the neighbouring temples of Apollo,
With equal steps the bright example follow.
There beardless warriors squeak each other's doom;
And silken Vandals plow the fall of Rome.
There demigods by entrechâts advance,
And Carthage flames demolish'd in a dance.
Arms clash, loud thunders roar, and chariots rattle;
While jarring trumpets animate the battle.*

*Now Critics, if you're angry, think on these,
And spare the bard who strives at least to please:
Judge, and be judg'd, in anger just, I pray:
Audire alteram partem is fair play.
In such a cause, altho' the task be hard;
I'll be myself of counsel for our bard;*

*Poe such authorities as none refuses,
 Flata's, and Coke's, and Blackstone's of the Muses;
 Farquhar and Rowe, and Wycherly we boast!
 And Avon's mighty seer, himself a host!*

*Yet, for I feel my female fears increase,
 Tho' arm'd for war, yet still I wish for peace:
 We own your pow'r, confess your wond'rous sway,
 Whom all our great dramatic realms obey:
 No merit we can claim, till you befriend it,
 Wit is not wit, unless your taste commend it:
 From th' Author's anvil a mere sluggish mass;
 Your plaudits stamp the coin, and bid it pass.
 By your mild sentence then decide our fate:
 Far better to be good than to be great!
 Like Britain's Monarch, act your generous parts,
 And fix your empire in our grateful hearts.*

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.





Luke Hansard, printer,
Lincoln's-Inn Fields.



